

JUST BOYS



MARY BELL WOOD



Class PZ7

Book W85

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JUST BOYS



JIMMY



BILLY



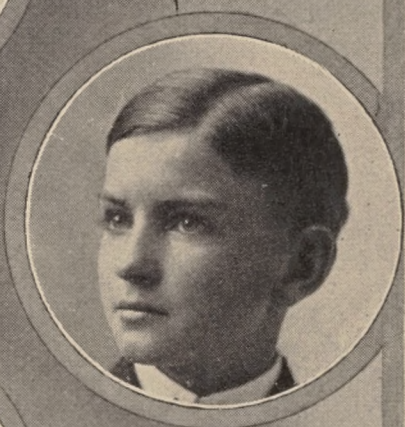
WILLIE



CHRISTIE



CHARLIE



ALLIE



GEORGIE

JUST BOYS

JUST BOYS

JANGLES FROM
THE CHOIR ROOM

By
MARY BUELL WOOD

ILLUSTRATED

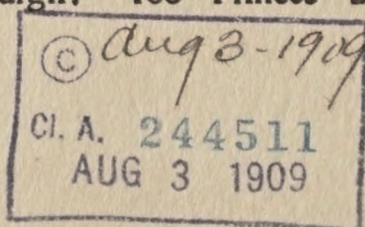


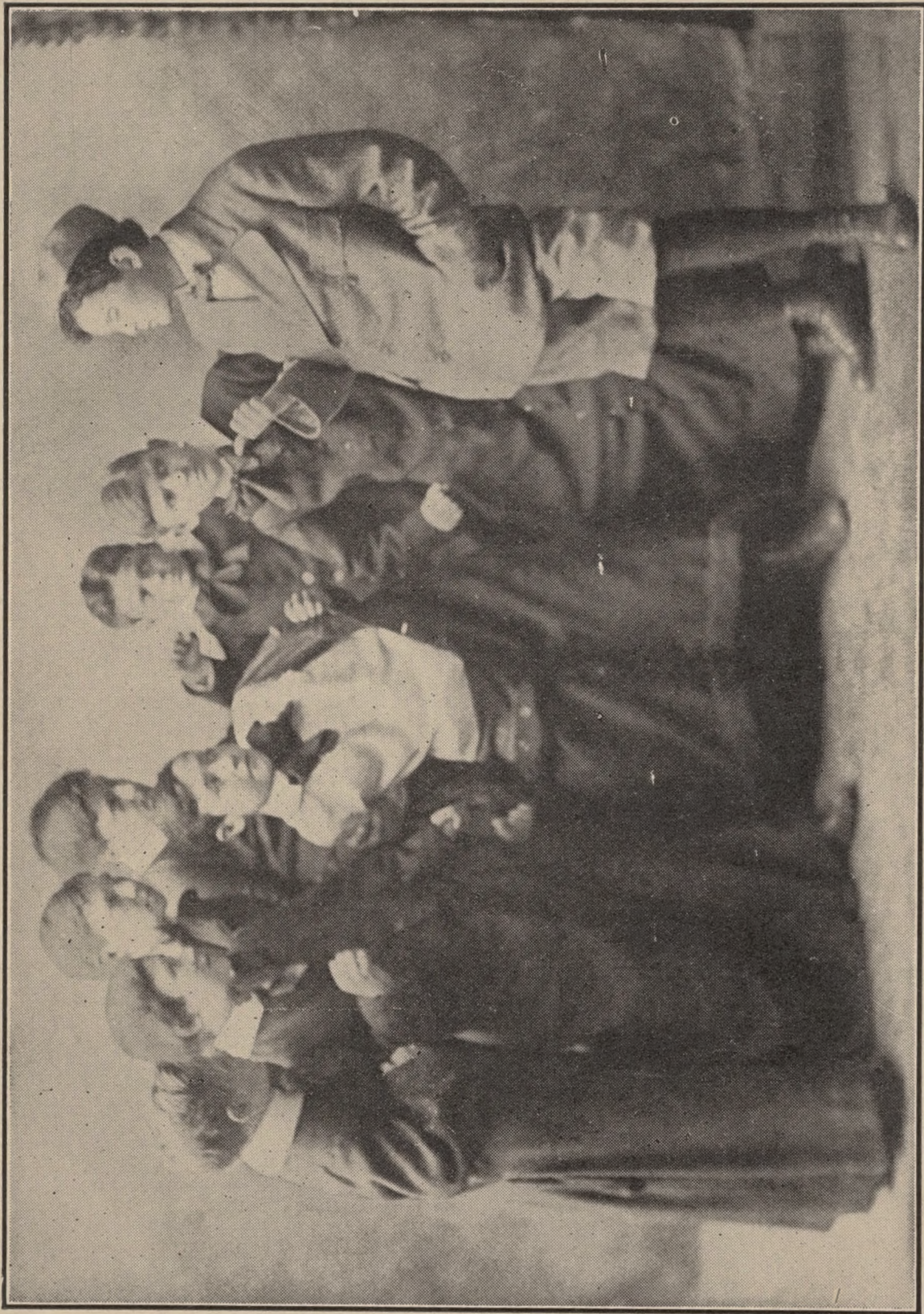
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"Here's that bunch of 'Piscopal singing sissies—fergot yer nighties, didn't yer?"

*In loving memory
of
My Mother and Aunt*

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JUST BOYS

I

IN SPITE OF THE BISHOP

IT all began with the Bishop. In an unguarded moment he said, and the quick ears caught it, that it was a shame, after they had sung through that long service, to make the choir boys stay to Sunday-school.

Now that choir class had long been a thorn in the flesh to a succession of teachers, who, one by one, had retired baffled from the struggle.

Its custom had been to tear off its cottas and cassocks, cast them on the choir room floor, and race whooping out of the churchyard and down the street, pursued by a panting and exasperated young woman, whom after a sufficiently interesting chase, it finally allowed to corral and lead it back for the so-called lesson.

From his fertility of resource in all kinds of mischief, as much as from his masterful spirit, Christie McCourt was its acknowledged leader, with Charlie Stolter a close second. What one did not think of the other did. Christie was twelve and tall for his age, while Charlie was a very little boy of ten, the baby in his home circle, gentle and affectionate in the extreme. It was only when combined with the rest of the choir to stimulate and admire, that he became worthy of his proud title of "Dare-devil."

Naturally the Bishop's agreeable and unexpected remark had thrown the class into the most gleeful and unmanageable state.

"Oh, Bishop, how could you say that?" almost tearfully remonstrated Miss Chalmers, its present long-suffering custodian; "now I'll never be able to get them to come at all."

"Well, don't you think it *is* a shame, yourself?"

"But if they don't stay, they're not going home. They'll simply roam the streets looking for fresh mischief, or else they'll go to some other Sunday-school where their friends are!" lamented the zealous churchwoman.

“Indeed, my dear, I’m very sorry, but if I took back what I said now, it would be worse than if I let it alone. I don’t see anything for it, but for you to persuade them to come, ‘in spite of the Bishop.’ ”

“I’ll have to try, but I’m afraid you’re too powerful an argument against me.”

However, the faithful young woman cudgelled her brains until she had evolved a working scheme. The following Sunday she went into the choir room before service, when all her flock were gathered together waiting the strains of the processional, and thus addressed them :

“Boys, you heard what the Bishop said last week ——”

Delighted chuckles, and shouts of “Gee ! Guess we *did* ! ”

“Well, of course he is perfectly right. We never go back of what our Bishop says. So I will tell you right now that you needn’t come to Sunday-school unless you want to.”

Miss Chalmers paused a moment artfully, to let this announcement sink into the astounded minds before her.

“No,” she went on, “no one *need* come—in fact it is going to be a question of who will be *allowed* to come. I am of course going to have a class, but it will be only twenty minutes long. I have an entirely new plan in regard to lessons, and there will be a great many surprises, which I haven’t time to enter into now. There goes the signal. The first surprise will be next Sunday.” And before the dazed class had recovered itself, it was marching into church behind the crucifer, mechanically singing “Onward, Christian Soldiers”—which it was well that it knew by heart.

The next Sunday found the choir class in its entirety meekly seated on its benches, its vestments neatly hung on their proper pegs, and with a pleased atmosphere of expectation pervading the choir room, when Miss Chalmers entered, accompanied by tall, broad-shouldered Mr. Tilson, its own special curate.

“Boys,” said Miss Chalmers briskly, “Mr. Tilson is going to tell us about the great goal he kicked when he was half-back on the Yale eleven. His text will be, ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.’ As

you have been singing so long, we will omit the service, and begin at once with the sermon."

At the most exciting point in the "sermon," Mr. Tilson snapped his watch, and quietly observing: "The twenty minutes are up; hymn 505, 'Fight the good fight with all thy might'" —dismissed the class with the usual collects and departed himself.

"You may go, boys," said Miss Chalmers, calmly.

For the first time known to history, the class declined to be dismissed. It hung around.

"Say, Miss Chalmers, ain't he goin' to tell us the end of that game?" came in amazed protest.

"Perhaps so—next Sunday—but you needn't come if you don't want to, you know, and twenty minutes is the limit for this class."

"Oh, yes, we'll be here—we'd just as soon come as not."

And the following week, Mr. Tilson finished his "sermon" with a few pointed suggestions as to whole-hearted service of all kinds—no cheating in games—no shirking in work.

By such and other ingenious but simple methods did Miss Chalmers carry out her compact, and Sunday by Sunday her flock increased, till she at last began to feel that she had conquered the problem of how to entice and hold fast, and that the choir class was subjugated "in spite of the Bishop."

"Mr. Tilson just told me the Bishop's comin' next Sunday, fellers," announced Christie McCourt, taking off his jacket, and getting into his cassock; "he's white, he is. I ain't at all sure I sha'n't git confirmed next class."

This astounding statement paralyzed his hearers, to whom Christie's devilments were a constant source of envy and inspiration. Mr. Burke, the choirmaster, would long ago have released the class leader and his partner in mischief from further attendance on choir practice, but that they liked to sing, and therefore could be depended upon for their solos. Accordingly he shut his eyes to much of their pranks, and Christie's melting notes still soared aloft and drew tears to the eyes of the congregation on those Sundays when the sight of the

golden-haired, blue-eyed little seraph singing on the opposite side of the chancel did not produce a like effect.

The next Sunday dawned clear and bright—a cloudless summer day. The long service had progressed without a hitch—the boys always behaved perfectly when the Bishop was there, because they liked him—so Mr. Burke was not harassed as usual, and could listen to the sermon himself. The Bishop was perhaps the only person present who was not enjoying things. He was busy suppressing the wish that his presence was not always the signal for an elaborate musical programme wherever he went, lengthening the service, and adding to his fatigue.

Miss Chalmers viewed her flock, its eyes glued to his face, with mingled satisfaction and relief. The sermon was short, and the office proceeded to its close.

Suddenly in the midst of the *Gloria* she distinctly heard shrill whistles, followed by a crash, and the hideous hissing of escaping steam. The proximity of the railroad tracks to the rear of its churchyard had long been a

standing grievance to the congregation of St. Michael's.

There could be no doubt that a collision had occurred. Fortunately the organ and the boys' own loudly chorused voices had prevented the noise penetrating the choir stalls, but how long after service would it be before the entrancing news would reach them, and then what would become of the class she had been so proudly looking forward to presenting as evidence of her efforts "in spite of the Bishop"? Through the open door she could see other and non-ecclesiastically hampered boys already starting down the bank. Quickly summoning her mother wit to the aid of her knowledge of boys, she slipped out of church, and was in the choir room, her back against the door, when the white-robed band, dismissed in the vestry after the recessional, came out. She was resolved on a daring and risky experiment. Would her faith be justified?

"Boys," she said, her voice shaking a little, "hang up your cottas, and then get your caps. I want you all to go out and be gone just ten minutes by Christie's watch. I will

tell you why in a minute, but first, can I trust you to come back again if I let you go?"

"Sure you can," spoke up the class leader, "*I'll* bring'm."

"Very well, I shall depend upon you, Christie. Now," throwing wide open the door, "let me tell you that just underneath the bank there has been an accident on the railroad, and ——" but she was speaking to empty benches. Out and over and through door and windows, poured a stream of shouting, struggling boys, and in the background appeared an anxious rector and an amused Bishop.

"Oh, my dear Helen, what *did* you do that for? Of course they won't come back—why didn't you have your class first, and then let them go?"

"Because, rector, I knew they'd hear the noise, and beside I wanted to try an experiment. *I* believe they'll come back." But her heart weakened within her.

It would have fainted altogether had she followed her flock to the scene of enchantment. There, right underneath their own

bank, lay the great freight wreck. Nothing could be more alluring. One engine was riding rampant on top of the other. Cars stood on end, or had plunged into the river, or were piled up in masses of the most hopeless and fascinating confusion. The choir class stood rivetted to the spot, its eyes standing out of its head, awed into speechlessness.

"Gee! Here's those 'Piscopal singing sissies—the whole bunch of'm. Fergot yer nighties, didn't yer?"

The speaker was Jimmy Knight, of the popular Sunday-school across the way, surrounded by what the rector called a bevy of "young heathen," and one need not be a choir boy to realize the deadly insult of this dart.

"Sissy yourself!" retorted the Dare-devil, ever valiant, and with an old grudge to settle. taking off his cassock preparatory to sailing in, But Christie, more prudent, held him back.

"We can't lay him out now—don't you know we've gotter go back?" Back! The volatile minds had already forgotten their promise. But Christie was of different stuff.

"Yes," he said firmly, "in just two minutes,

we're all goin' up the hill again. We promised Miss Chalmers, 'n we ain't sneaks, see?"

"Aw, fellers, just git ont'er the sissy boys—gotter go back 'n say their Catechism. They dassent stay—their Bishop's there, 'n he's goin' ter catch'm, 'n confirm the whole bunch!"

Nothing but sheer will-power withheld the class leader from answering these heaped-up taunts in battle royal.

"All right for *you*, Jim Knight—you just wait!" was all he dared permit himself, as he generalled his reluctant forces, and marched them back up the hill in what was verily a strait and narrow path.

"And only five minutes late, you see, Bishop," Miss Chalmers was saying exultantly.

But the Bishop looked very serious.

"Boys," he said, "I'm proud of the class that kept together 'in spite of the Bishop.' I wonder if you know how much this means—your coming back this way! You've lived out my text this morning—do any of you remember it?"

“Yes, sir, *I* do,” said Christie, promptly ;
“‘Better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he
that taketh a city’—but just wait till I catch
that Jim Knight when I ain’t said I’d come
back !”

II

THE DARE-DEVIL

“**A**IN’T it awful hard to remember all that ?” asked Charlie Stolter, whose proficiency in all feats of mischief had won him, young as he was, the proud title of “Dare-devil,” as the choir boys gathered admiringly around the small, red-cassocked form which on week-days was only little Willie Crosby, and but recently promoted from their own rank to that of the altar boys.

“Not so awful after you git used to it ; and Bernie tells me a lot. The worst is the wheeling ; Howard’s so tall, I gotter take four little steps to git ’round when he does.”

The altar boys were a notch higher in the ecclesiastical scale than the choir boys, and the distinction was felt in both ranks. Not only were their vestments more elaborate as to fashion and vivid as to hue, being of sheerest lawn and over red, in contrast to the plain black-

and-white of the choir, but their whole atmosphere was one of a higher altitude.

To be sure, as Willie said, "You couldn't have any fun, 'n it was awful quiet 'n perlite," still, a distinct value attaches to the remote and aloof, which outweighs its penalties. What, for instance, was the somewhat stale and barren satisfaction of tying up the sleeves of another feller's cassock five minutes before vesting time, to the exciting and ever fresh attraction of candle lighting, bestowed for the week, according to the honour roll? And to march sedately in with your comrade just before service in your red cassock with the eyes of the congregation following your every move, and solemnly to pass to your side of the altar, there to see the lights twinkle out one by one under your taper?

What again was the comparative immunity of the choir stalls from detection in a quiet whisper during the Epistle, to the importance of filing slowly down to the steps of the chancel, there to receive into the large covered alms basin the rattling contents of the offertory plates, and finally with your mate to bear

the same with slow and military precision up the exact centre of the long chancel to the waiting celebrant?

Well might those on whom such glory and dignity rested feel that between them and their former trifling existence in the choir room, there was a gulf fixed, and that it were wholesome for the present choir to bear this fact ever in mind.

One bright morning in June, the Bishop was to visit St. Michael's, for which he seemed to have always a specially warm spot in his heart. He and the rector, walking down the leafy street together, did not dream of the consternation in the ranks of the altar boys. Willie Crosby's mother had sent word that Willie was down with measles, and could not possibly be there. What was to be done? There was now no mate for Bernie Winchester. Any other position could easily be filled by one of the other servers, but for Willie's part in the service only a very small boy would answer, and they were all too large and too old.

Miss Chalmers, of whose choir class they

had all in their turn been members before their translation from the choir room to the higher sphere, was called in consultation with Mr. Tilson, their own special curate, and Mr. Burke, the choirmaster.

"Can't one of your boys do it, Burke?" asked Mr. Tilson.

"I should think Charlie Stolter might, he's so quick and imitative, and he's the right size," suggested Miss Chalmers.

"But he's so full of mischief, he'd be sure to laugh," objected Mr. Burke.

"Better try him, anyway," said the curate. "Here, Charlie, do you think you could take Willie's place to-day?"

"Gee! I dassent—I'd sure queer it."

"Oh, no, dear, you needn't be afraid; you've seen it done so many times you won't make a mistake, and Bernie will prompt you, won't you, Bernie?"

"Sure," said Bernie. "Come on, kid—all you've got to remember is to keep your eyes on me, and do what I do. I'll tell you when to wheel."

"But who's to sing Charlie's solo in the



“ Headed by Howard, the tall crucifer, with the Dare-devil looking very small indeed, on the right.”

Sanctus ? ” remonstrated Mr. Burke. “ Christie McCourt has a sore throat and can’t take it ; Allie Dugan might, but he’s so bashful I’m afraid his voice wouldn’t come out.”

“ Well, he’ll have to *shake* it out to-day,” laughed the curate.

“ They’ll all try their best, they’re so devoted to the Bishop,” added Miss Chalmers, encouragingly.

And by the time the higher dignitaries arrived, all signs of perturbation had vanished, except in the anxious faces of the under-studies.

It was a High Festival, and around the church marched the procession headed by Howard, the tall crucifer, with the Dare-devil, looking very small indeed, on his right, trying hard to take those long strides without getting out of step.

“ Rejoice ”—sang the choir boys— “ rejoice, give thanks and sing.”

It was all the Dare-devil could do to keep from joining in, but he set his lips tight, and solemnly stalked on up the chancel steps, and passed with Bernie to one side as the long pro-

cession filed up, two by two, and overflowed into choir stalls and sanctuary seats.

At last the service commenced—the Bishop's sermon was soon a thing of the past—the offertory had been attended by less jangling and rattling than usual—the music was going perfectly. Mr. Tilson, at the gleaming, flower-decked altar, was never in finer voice.

Miss Chalmers, glancing up, suddenly started. What was the matter with Charlie? His head was nodding—now it rested against Bernie. Poor little fellow—kneeling so long, and the close scent of the flowers, had made him sleepy. No one would notice, though.

“Evermore praising Thee, and saying ——” chanted Mr. Tilson. In the hush that followed every head was bowed.

Then up swelled the organ, pulsing softly into the opening notes of the Sanctus. Mr. Burke looked at Allie, who obediently opened his paling lips, but the sound that came from them could hardly be heard across the chancel. Again the organ repeated the opening notes, as Mr. Burke whispered:—“Now, Allie, try again.” But again the effort was ineffectual.

Once more the chords sounded, and he was about signalling the choir to go on without the solo, when up from beside the altar rose a high, sweet voice —

“Holy—Holy—Holy —— ”

Charlie's eyes were still closed, but his brain had caught the familiar notes which belonged to his own solo.

“Gee! Ain't he got the nerve!” whispered the delighted choir boys, admiringly recognizing in this a fresh illustration of their devil's daring.

Again the thrice-repeated “Holy” swelled through the arched chancel—then the singer started into consciousness.

What had he done? “Oh, gee! Queered it after all!”

He glanced at the Bishop—he was kneeling with his face in his hands; was he angry? He turned to see Mr. Burke, who nodded to him to go on, softly continuing the organ accompaniment.

By this time the Dare-devil was thoroughly frightened. How could he sing without his music, and with every one's eye on him? But

Bernie whispered : " Go on, kid ; don't you see you're queering it a lot worse by not singing ? " So he threw back his head, and out poured the flood of melody, with only an occasional tremble of the clear voice.

The solo ended, the choir took up the strain and repeated it in full chorus, culminating in a burst of triumph. Then, as the rolling harmonies died away, there rose once more the high, sweet notes from the little red cassock kneeling beside the altar—" Holy—Holy—Holy—Amen," the last word dying away as the organ grew fainter and fainter to a close.

As the Bishop was resting a moment after service in the vestry, the door was pushed open, and a mortified and badly shaken Daredevil stole in.

" I didn't mean to queer it, Bishop, honest I didn't. I must have fell asleep ! I'll git fined fer that ; but that ain't what's eatin' me—it's havin' you think I queered it a purpose."

The choirmaster, coming in, was just in time to see a tearful little red figure taken up in the Bishop's arms, and to hear the Bishop say :

“No, my boy, I know you didn’t mean to ‘queer it,’ and Mr. Burke’s not going to fine you either, for here he is, and I’m going to ask him not to. And, Mr. Burke, I want Charlie to sing that Sanctus for me every time I come; will you, Charlie?”

“Oh, yes, sir—thank you, sir—you bet I will, sir!” said the Dare-devil, throwing his arms around the Bishop’s neck and kissing him. “Gee! I’m awful glad you don’t think I queered it a purpose!”

III

GETTING EVEN

“**W**HAT was the name of the great Jewish Council?” asked Miss Chalmers, not very expectantly, it must be confessed.

“That was the one where they had such a bully time camping out in booths and tents, wasn’t it?” ventured Charlie, hopefully.

“No, that’s Tabernacles—don’t you know?” corrected Allie Dugan, with a lofty superiority soon to fall crashing to earth before Miss Chalmers’ incisive:—

“And what was Tabernacles?”

This question being received in dead silence, she went probingly on:—

“Don’t you know the difference between one of the great Jewish Feasts, and *the* great Jewish Council? Come now, think a minute—well, then, turn to your written answers, and I’m sure you’ll find you have it right.”

"Sanhedrin!" shouted the choir class as one boy.

"You see you simply wrote it down without using your minds at all, and I may as well take this opportunity to tell you that I am very much discouraged. [Blank looks surrounded her.] Here are the examinations coming on, and not one single one of you will come anywhere near grade, as usual. What makes me feel particularly badly is, that I have been talking with Miss Murray, of the Sunday-school across the street, and she tells me her boys are always up to grade—one of them, Jimmy Knight—I believe you know him—regularly gets one hundred per cent."

The choir class gave a sudden start and glanced about it, while a dark cloud settled down upon its countenance.

"And," went on Miss Chalmers, "I am so mortified that these boys are brighter than you are, but figures never lie [Miss Chalmers was young] and you know thirty per cent. is the highest average you ever get."

Continued and gloomy silence endured—no

one being able to deny the damaging but well-known fact.

“Another thing which troubles me is that Miss Murray must be a much better teacher than I am. I ought to be able to keep you up to the mark in spite of yourselves. So I am seriously thinking of asking the rector to let some one else take this class.”

“Aw—Miss Chalmers—say—now——”

“Yes, I’m afraid I’m not the right one for you. Of course if you can’t learn, you can’t, and I shall not expect you to do anything in these examinations, because they are too hard for you. It seems a pity that Jimmy Knight should be so much brighter; but then, as I said, he probably has a better teacher.”

And the anguished cry of:—“Oh, Miss Chalmers, *please*——” fell unheeded, as the pretty white dress swept out of the choir room, leaving a train of dismayed and broken spirits behind it.

“Well, what d’ you think of that?” gasped Allie, the first to recover himself.

“’N Jim Knight gits one hundred per cent., does he?” lowered Christie.

“’N Miss Chalmers isn’t as nice as Miss Murray, isn’t she?” contributed Willie Crosby, who—though now ranking among the altar boys—was still, by reason of his extremely tender years, with his old comrades in Sunday-school.

The bitter irony of this stung Charlie into speech.

“Fierce!” he bristled. “Miss Murray hasn’t got pink cheeks ’n little curly curls round her forehead. But I tell you, fellers, girls are queer. My sister Meta, she gits that way sometimes, ’n talks as if everything’s busted ’n nothing’s ever goin’ to come right again—but she gits over it. P’raps Miss Chalmers ’ll feel different to-morrow.”

“Gee! She’s got to—we’re not goin’ to have another teacher,” said the class leader, firmly; “but I don’t know anything about girls—we’ve only got two at home, ’n they’re babies.”

“We’ve got two, but they’re married, so they’re no good,” added Allie.

“Well, I got seven, so I ought to know,” declared Charlie with finality.

"Anyway we ain't goin' to have another teacher."

A unanimous: "You bet we ain't!" followed Christie's decision.

The experienced Dare-devil, with his seven elder sisters, had thrown a slight gleam of hope on the situation, but it was a very sober and uncertain group that seated itself on the bank to discuss the matter just as Mr. Tilson came around the corner blithely whistling:

" ' You'll have to wait till my ship comes in—
Yo-ho, yo-ho, yo-ho ! ' "

Mr. Tilson was young and buoyant by nature, and to-day he was feeling in particularly good spirits, owing to some encouraging comments on his sermon by the rector. So cheered and warmed was he by this much valued appreciation, that he was oblivious to his surroundings, and had almost run down the silent and dejected choir class stretched out on the grass in gloomy meditation, before he was aware of its presence.

In fact even then he doubted his own eyes. Usually its whereabouts was perfectly evident

to any one possessed of ears, within a quarter mile of its vicinity.

“Your mother isn’t worse, is she, Jerome?” anxiously began the curate, casting about in his mind for some plausible solution of the phenomenon.

“No, sir, mamma’s better this morning—and she told me to be sure not to forget to thank you a lot for ——”

“Oh, that’s all right, old chap,” interrupted the curate, reddening—“tell her I’ll be out again on Tuesday, will you?”—putting his arm around the lad, who was the only one present in ignorance of the sad truth that he would soon be without a mother. “But what *is* the matter with you boys?” he went on, puzzled.

At first, only a confused jumble of:—“Miss Chalmers — Jim Knight — examinations—percent.—another teacher—” reached his ears, but little by little the dynamic facts came out, that their own Miss Chalmers, after taunting them with their inability to learn, and contrasting them with their deadly enemy—greatly to that enemy’s advantage—had fur-

ther lowered their self-esteem by declining to require anything of them in regard to the coming examinations, and had finally added the crowning injury of darkly threatening to leave them in the lurch, herself.

"Well now, that's pretty bad, isn't it? But you fellows must brace up, and we'll see what can be done about it. I don't see what makes choir boys such young—imps, but I was one myself, so I ought to know."

"Gee! Were you ever a choir boy, Mr. Tilson?"

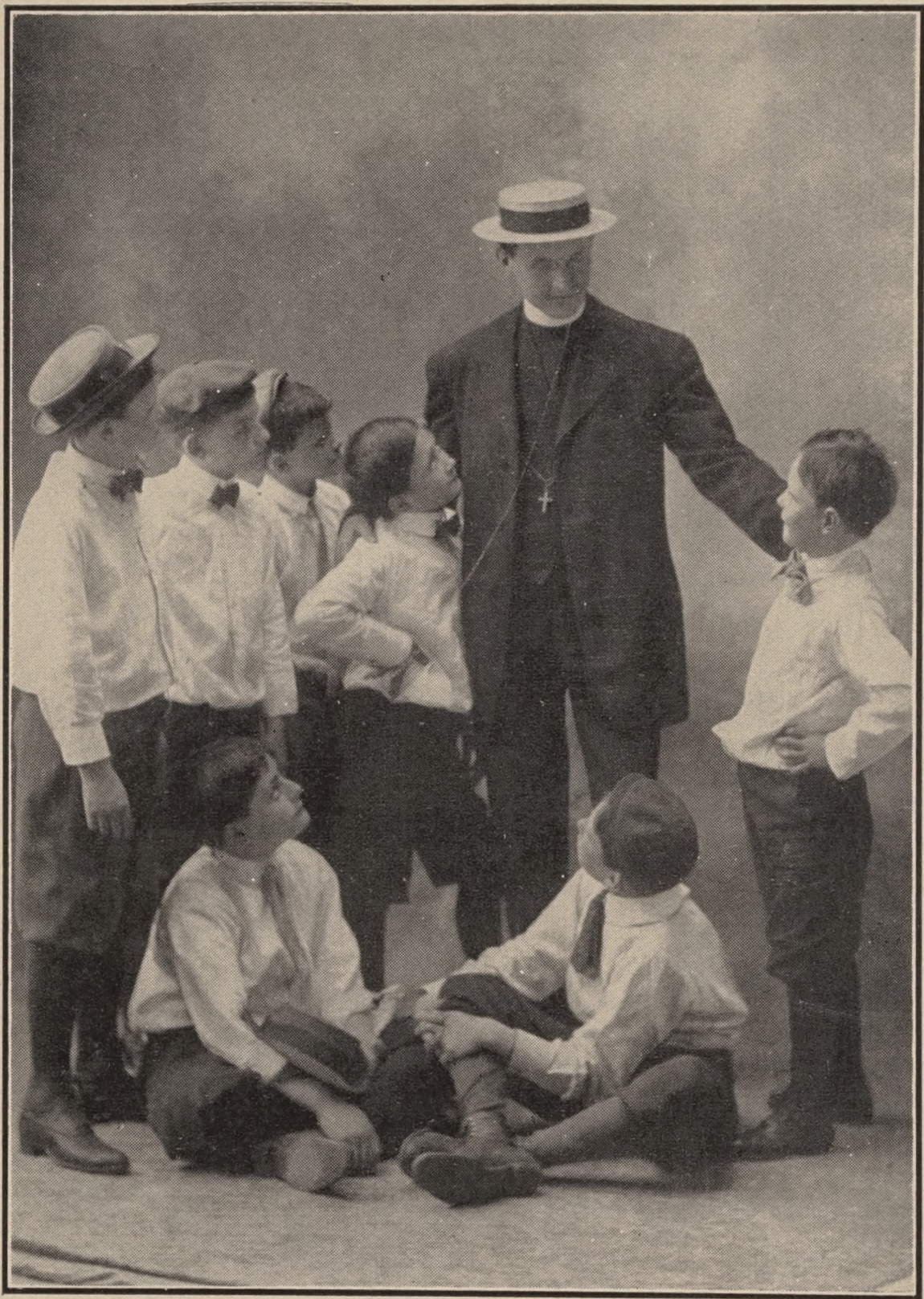
"The worst ever, Willie," cheerfully admitted the curate, unabashed, "and, as I said, I don't know why, either."

"I guess it's because the music 'n all makes us feel kinder queer inside, 'n when we git out, we just have to fool!" suggested the Dare-devil.

"Perhaps you're right, Charlie," returned Mr. Tilson, soberly.

"You can help us out some way, sure, can't you, Mr. Tilson?" urged Christie.

"Well, there *is* a way by which you could get even with Miss Chalmers, and at the same time make her very happy. It will mean a lot



“ We men know we can do anything we make up our minds to.”

of work, but we men know we can do anything we make up our mind to."

"Sure, we can," responded Willie Crosby, with conviction.

"What I would suggest is this: your course is only twelve lessons—now what's the matter with your all taking hold and learning them? Of course those boys over there aren't any brighter than you are, and their lessons are no harder than ours, either. Suppose you all read up at home, and then come to my study every other night this week, and we'll have a grand going over the whole course backwards and skipping; then, whatever the examination questions may be, you'll be all fixed up to answer them. What do you say?"

"Gee! That's great, Mr. Tilson," exclaimed the class leader, his ambitious spirit catching fire.

"So it's agreed, fellows, is it? You are all to take hold now—no nonsense—and if we don't give Miss Chalmers the surprise of her life, I'm mistaken."

"You bet we will!" was the unanimous response.

"But do you suppose she'll shake us?" Charlie's voice was tremulous.

"No, I don't believe you could hire her to do it, and, anyway, the rector wouldn't let her. But she's discouraged, probably, and knowing what choir boys are I don't blame her much; do you?"

"She's all right," chorused her loyal charges, as the curate heartily grasped each hand, and went on his way briskly resuming his whistling, and leaving behind him a chastened, but much uplifted choir class.

"I do wish the Bishop were not coming on examination Sunday," bemoaned Miss Chalmers to the rector.

"Why, what's the matter, my dear?" asked the kind old man.

"Oh, my boys are always such a disappointment at such times; they seem to learn like parrots—without any proper reactions at all—and I hate to have him see what an unprofitable servant I am."

"But, my dear girl, it's largely his own fault if they don't do well, and he knows it. How

can you expect to hold them up to grade when, on account of his saying they ought not to be made to come at all, you only keep them twenty minutes ? ”

“I know—but all the same I wish he were not coming, and I wish it were over.”

And it was a very listless and half-hearted Miss Chalmers, who, with her flock, occupied the modest benches in the extreme rear of the room, to which, owing to its stimulating influence on the other scholars, long experience had found it expedient to relegate the choir class on the occasions of its appearance in the main school.

She glanced at her charges. Surely never before had they seemed all teeth. Each face was distended to an extent which even the most soul satisfying feat of mischief was not wont to evoke. The Bishop, the rector, Mr. Tilson, the other curates—even the teachers—were all broadly smiling. She, apparently, was the only one out of tune with the festive key. Her spirits sank, and she prepared for the customary mortification, as the Bishop rose to give the results of the written papers.

“I will commence as usual,” he said, “with the highest grade of marks, and I am very glad to say, children, that you have done 'far better this year than ever before. Kindly hand me that list, Mr. Tilson—let me see—ah, yes :

“*Miss Chalmers' Class*

Christopher McCourt	-	100 %
Charles Henry Stolter	-	100 %
Alson Jay Dugan	-	100 %
Jerome Wright Moran	-	100 %
William Acker Crosby	-	100 %.”

The dazed Miss Chalmers at first started and thought with a pang that this was only a heart-rending mistake. But, as name after name was read out, and as, one by one, her entire flock rose to its feet in response—the eyes of the whole room glued in stupefied amazement upon it—she turned from white to red and from red to white, and finally burst into tears, an act so unexpected and appalling as to take completely aback even the Dare-devil with his vast experience of girls. For an instant it seemed that the supreme happiness of the triumphant moment was about to be entirely lost, but the Bishop came to the rescue:—

"You have all heard, my dear children, of tears of joy ; now, I think you are seeing some of them. And I would suggest that the choir class (with whom I very decidedly want a few words presently) take their teacher into their own room, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if she very soon found herself quite able to smile again."

"Oh, boys!" cried Miss Chalmers, laughing and crying at once, as soon as the doors had closed behind them, "what a perfectly darling surprise! If I didn't know you'd all hate it, I'd just love to kiss every one of you."

"Begin with me," insinuated the Dare-devil, throwing his arms around her neck. "I'm used to it."

"'N I don't mind it a bit," added the class leader, following his example.

"Nor I—nor I!" shouted the others, suiting the action to the word.

"But how did you ever *do* it?" went on Miss Chalmers, emerging laughing and rosy from the engulfing arms.

"Oh, Mr. Tilson, he helped us."

"He didn't do much," put in a deeper voice

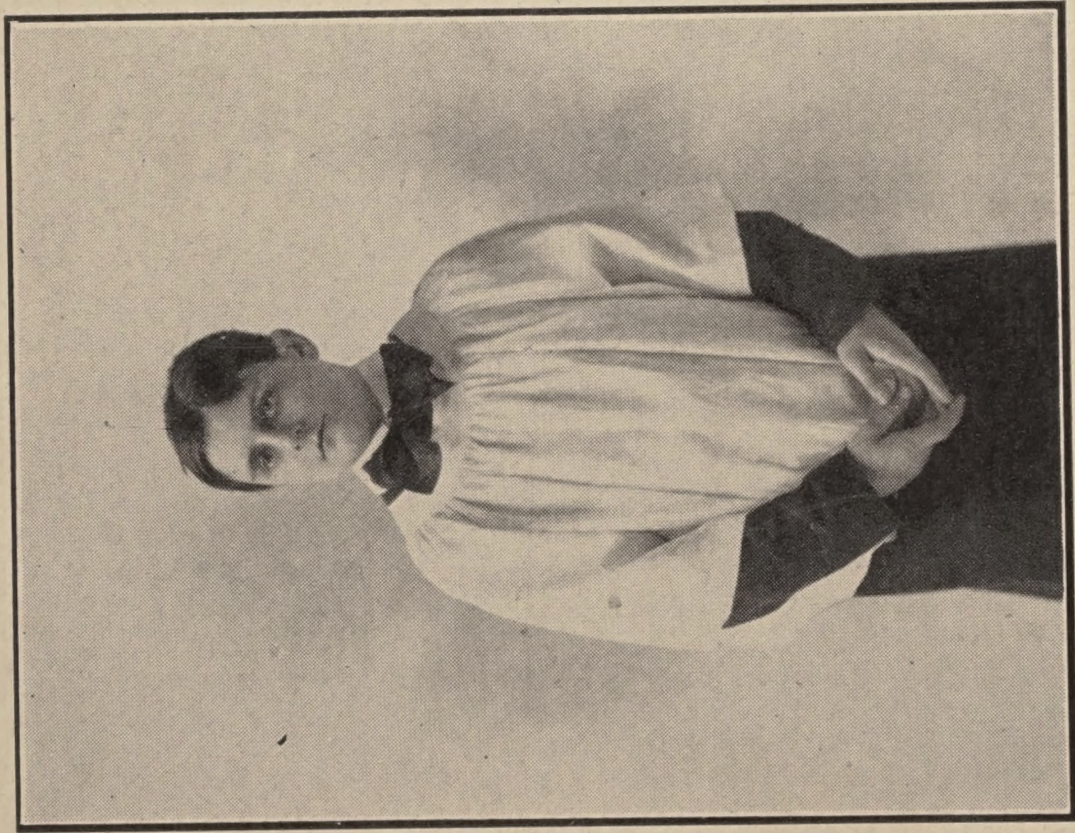
from the door; "he just set the ball rolling, and your own boys did the rest."

"Say, Miss Chalmers, you won't shake us, *will* you?"

A breathless silence followed Allie's voicing of the general anxiety.

"*Never!*" exclaimed Miss Chalmers, as the choir class, with shrieks of joy, rolled over and over itself, out onto the grass, by way of relieving its pent up feelings.

"And," she called after it, her cheeks pinker than ever, and the little curls, which had commended themselves to Charlie's discriminating taste, blowing all about her pretty young forehead, "I don't think Jimmy Knight is *half* so bright as you are—and what's more, I never did."



CHRISTIE

“The admired and versatile class leader.”



CHARLIE THE DARE-DEVIL

“Proud title, bestowed for his proficiency in all
feats of mischief.”

IV

A BATTLE ROYAL

A GLOOM which could be cut with a knife hovered over the choir class. Christie McCourt, its admired and versatile leader, had fallen from his high estate, and great was the consternation. The exciting cause of the trouble did not threaten such serious and far-reaching results, but Christie's nature combined mischief with a depth of character beyond his fellows.

For some time past the choirmaster had been fearing that the sweet, clear soprano notes were nearing the decline of their power, but he had said nothing to the lad himself; so when, all at once, in the midst of the Magnificat, a sudden, hoarse croak brought to an abrupt conclusion his beautiful solo, mortification and surprise were equally mingled. Fortunately for the service, little Charlie Stolter, on the other side of the chancel, took up the strain at a nod from Mr. Burke, and Mary's

lovely canticle soared aloft with only a moment's pause—so slight, that the congregation thought the two boys were singing antiphonally, as they often did. But to Christie, the sound was gall and wormwood.

“For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,” sang Charlie, in his melting tones, looking as he always did, like the golden-haired angel he was not.

Now Christie and Charlie were not only the leaders in all kinds of mischief—and, incidentally, the two solo boys—but they were also the closest of friends. It was, therefore, with the most dumbfounded surprise that, after service, the rest of the choir saw its leader deliberately walk up and strike the younger boy a blow so severe that he staggered and fell under it. The tears that sprang to the great blue eyes were not from pain alone—that Christie could treat him so hurt even more. And Christie, directly after, with blazing crimson cheeks and tight-set lips had rushed out of the choir room into the darkness, without a word.

Such were the beginnings of the trouble.

Charlie's affectionate nature was only too ready to forgive and forget, and he would have gone a good deal more than half-way to meet his old comrade on the road to "making up."

But Christie must have inherited with his black hair, his dark blue eyes, and his rich, vivid colouring, something of the Celtic nature to which they belonged—a stern and uncompromising sense of justice, which absolutely prevented him from being forgiven.

"I did it," he repeated over and over again to Miss Chalmers to whom he had always presented a phase of boy disposition, requiring especial dealings. "I did it—I hit Charlie—he hadn't done a thing—Mr. Burke told him to sing when I broke down—but I got crazy all of a sudden, 'n I struck him. What if he *does* forgive me? That doesn't make it any different. I did it, 'n sayin' I'm sorry won't undo it."

"My dear boy, you are taking a very morbid view," said Miss Chalmers, slowly; "think how we all do things that are wrong all the time, and yet, if we are sorry ——"

“That’s all right—but Charlie ’n me’s different.”

“I really don’t know what to do about Christie,” Miss Chalmers reported to Mr. Tilson, the boys’ particular curate; “what can we say to make him see things differently?”

“I don’t know; and the poor little chap has been having a lot to contend with at home, too—his mother married again, you know, and the stepfather doesn’t understand the boy, while the mother is absorbed by her two babies. There is every reason to account for Christie’s sudden fit of passion—goaded on—last straw—but the position that he won’t be forgiven is something new in my experience of boys. The rector can’t do anything with him, either. It’s most extraordinary.”

It was on a warm morning in July that the Bishop, arriving by an early train—for he always liked to make a long day of it at St. Michael’s—met Miss Chalmers, her pretty face wearing a sad and troubled look, quite unusual to it.

“Come into the church, and tell me all

about your boys," said the Bishop, who believed in being a real father to his flock, and who was beloved by the whole diocese, young and old.

"Oh, Bishop," began poor Miss Chalmers, "we're so distressed about Christie McCourt," and into the Bishop's sympathizing ears poured the story.

"Can't forgive himself—won't be forgiven, eh? Well, I always liked that boy, and now I respect him. He's the kind of stuff we want! Let me have a talk with him; do you think he will see me?"

"Oh, I know he will, Bishop—only——"

"Just send him to me, my dear; I'll be in the vestry all the morning."

"Christie, the Bishop wants to see you—he's in the church; will you go?" asked Miss Chalmers, a trifle doubtfully, in spite of her assurance to the contrary, as she ran across the lad a few moments later.

"Sure I will!" returned Christie, with his usual promptness, his face brightening up, then suddenly clouding over.

"Go in, dear; you'll find him waiting for

you," and Miss Chalmers gave his hand a warm little squeeze, for this one of her charges—so full of mischief, so hard to manage—was the dearest of all.

"Come in, my boy," welcomed the Bishop heartily; "I'm glad to see you. And what's all this trouble between you and Charlie?"

"No trouble with him, sir; I'm the one; I hit him."

"And you feel mean all through about it; I know just how it is."

Christie's dark blue eyes opened a little wider.

"Yes, I did pretty much the same sort of thing, when I was about your age, and I get hot to this day whenever I think of it. The other boy was smaller, too, and loved me. I was about as mean to him as I could be."

"Gee!" observed Christie, awestruck.

"Yes, and I couldn't forgive myself; he would have been only too glad to forgive me, but I wouldn't let him. I had a feeling that I couldn't undo what I had done, and that no amount of forgiveness would blot it out."

"Why, that's just how I feel!"

"Is it? I thought perhaps it might be. Well now, do you know, that boy fell ill, and he wanted to see me so much that I went, and what do you think he said?"

"What?"

"He said: 'Jimmy'—('Gee!' thought Christie, 'called the Bishop Jimmy')—'Jimmy, I'm awful sick, and it would make me feel better if you'd be friends again—what's keeping you? You're the only one that's remembering—I've forgotten it long ago. Please stay and help me get well.' And some way things seemed to get straight in my mind. I was selfish, that's what I was—if Tom wanted me and I wouldn't let him have me, why wasn't I being just as mean as I was in the first place, only in a different way?"

"What did you do, sir?"

"Why, I just let myself be forgiven—and I tell you, my son, I learned a lesson I can't forget. It's a great deal easier for some natures to hold out—proud and hard—to the idea that they have done wrong, and they will suffer the consequences—you and I are that kind, I expect. But how about other people? We

make them suffer, too, and what do you call that ? ”

“ I know, Bishop, but —— ”

“ There’s another ‘ but. ’ I often wish there were no such word. Turn things around for a moment ; if Charlie had struck you in a sudden fit of anger, wouldn’t you forgive him ? ”

“ Sure I would, sir,—but —— ”

“ Take care of those ‘ buts. ’ And wouldn’t you think it very mean of him if he wouldn’t make up—no matter what ground he might put it on ? You just stop and think. It doesn’t make any difference what you do to yourself—I mean whether you forgive yourself or not—but you have no right to go on being mean to some one else. Do you understand me, my boy ? ”

“ I think so, sir, but —— ”

“ Another thing—I shall speak to the rector and Mr. Tilson about it—I want you to be the choir crucifier until you are able to sing again.”

“ Oh, Bishop, do you *think* —— ”

“ No, I don’t think—I *know*—and I want you to begin being crucifier this very night.”

The editorial sanctum of the *Parish Echo* was in the throes of its weekly (?) issue. The career of the *Echo* was a somewhat checkered and meteoric one. Simple and interesting had it been to go about soliciting—and *collecting on the spot*—subscriptions to the paper from the parishioners, all of whom naturally felt a loyalty towards the enterprise. But, after the first two or three numbers, sustained mainly by contributions from Mr. Tilson, Miss Chalmers, and some of the big brothers, the effort to fill the editorial pages became stringent and irksome. Christie had been its mainstay, and since his defection, the struggles of literary genius were more severe than ever.

"What are we going to do for a leader, this week?" asked Allie, editor-in-chief, and general manager.

"I'm setting up one now that my grandma wrote," returned Charlie, head printer, "but she's got so many sentences beginning with '*B*' that I've used up all our '*B*' caps now."

"Boys should be quiet. Boys should be respectful. Boys should be obedient." Such were the stirring and epoch-making senti-

ments with which Charlie's grandma's editorial bristled.

"I'll have to begin the rest with a dash:—oys should not interrupt,'" went on Charlie, dispiritedly.

"What else is there?" asked Jerome, the city editor.

"Ain't *you* got some stuff?"

"Yes, some, but I couldn't git much. Here's about all:—

"'Polly Dugan is moulting this week.'

"'Willie Crosby has got a new sister.'

"'Georgie Childs has gone to New York.'"

"Well, string that out in long primer, 'n double lead it," commanded the manager.

"How about ads, Billy?"

"Why, Mr. Davenport says it don't pay him to keep his in," reported the advertising agent, Billy Wells, "because we don't come out every week. I told him we came out as often as we had enough to fill up. But he says that's no way to run a paper, specially one that's all paid up subscriptions."

"I wish we could chuck it, but Mr. Tilson

says we got the money, 'n we gotter keep our bargain."

"Gee! It's awful tough work!" groaned the editor-in-chief.

"Here, Carl, run out 'n see if you can't pick up something on the street." And Carl Ellis, the one *official* reporter, sped obediently away.

Moments rushed on—the time for "going to press" was inconveniently near, and only one page filled.

"If we only had Christie to help us! He'd have thought of half a dozen things by this time," growled Allie.

A cloud fell on Charlie's bright face:—

"Well, he ain't the only feller in the bunch. I guess we can git on without him, if he don't wanter come," he returned, trying to maintain an air of easy indifference under his repeated rebuffs.

"Mr. Merrick says if we don't stop puttin' in every number that Mike Childs has a new collar, he shall begin to think we ain't got brains enough to make up any news items," complained the advertising manager.

"Well, let him try 'n run a paper, then; he'd

find it tough, I guess." The editor's temper was variable.

"I gotter have those forms right away," announced the head printer; "I can't git home in time for supper now, 'n my mother says if I don't stop bein' late, she'll stop my bein' printer." This was indeed a threatened blow, Charlie's nimble fingers rendering his services invaluable to the typesetting force. His words carried weight.

"Well, we'll have to set up all the ads in bigger type, 'n fill in with something about the weather," concluded Allie.

"Hello, fellers," exclaimed a brisk voice from the door, "paper all full up?"

The manager, the printer, the city editor, the reporter (who had just come in from a fruitless quest), the advertising agent—all jumped, and stood ready for emergencies. The speaker was Christie, looking as calm and undisturbed as though there had been no time of travail in the choir class.

"I thought maybe you'd have room for a little short thing I wrote about some trout I caught the other day—they was whoppers."

"Set it up, quick, Charlie," commanded the editor-in-chief.

"How's the paper gittin' on?" inquired the newcomer, politely.

"Fierce!" admitted the truthful Allie. Conversation languished, no one but Christie being entirely at his ease.

In fact Charlie, whether owing to high speed pressure, or to agitation, set up half the letters upside down, and the exciting account of the fishing trip was somewhat marred in consequence. Still, as the editor said, any one could guess what it meant, 'n if they couldn't, they could hold it the other way 'round.

At last the "forms" were made up, and all hands, including the "special writer," turned to for the printing. It was a very inky and exhausted staff when the "edition" was finally complete and folded, ready for distribution.

It was not, however, primarily to assist at the issue of the *Echo*, which had brought the class leader into the editorial rooms. His purposes were definite, and his methods were his own.

The Bishop's sympathetic insight having

pricked the bubble of his pride, and stripped of its dignity his supposed impregnable position, he had promptly abandoned it with his accustomed decision of character. The healing of the breach with Charlie, and the resumption of his relations with the choir class followed naturally as a logical necessity, to which he now addressed himself with corresponding despatch and artful suggestion.

"Say, fellers," he observed, "I got old Jinny outside, 'n what's the matter with us all goin' up 'n callin' on the Bishop? We can pick up the rest as we go along."

"Bully!" responded the editorial staff in unison, entirely restored to its ease by this off-hand manner. It had uncomfortably been expecting to have to *say* something—or to "make up" in some tangible and painfully embarrassing effort.

But its leader was more than equal to the carrying off of any situation, however awkward—even one where he might be supposed to feel, to say the least, constrained.

"All right," he returned cheerfully, and in his usual briskness of tone, entirely un-

hampered by conventional restrictions, "pile in, fellers—Charlie 'n me'll ride on her back—won't we, Charlie?—just ketch hold of me——Git up, Jinny!"

And the sight which met the eyes of the Bishop, sitting on the rectory porch, surrounded by Miss Chalmers, Mr. Tilson, the rector, and a choice selection of the faithful, was a station wagon, with small boys overflowing its sides, and hanging on to its end, and drawn by an old white horse, on whose back, his arms entwined about the younger lad, sat, triumphant and beaming, the class leader, once more restored to his own, with Charlie's blue eyes again smiling up into his, and the two tongues chattering so fast, that only a confused mingling of happy voices conveyed to the delighted watchers on the porch the joyful assurance that a battle had been fought—and won.

V

THE COMPELLING OF JIMMY

“**G**O into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in,” had been the Bishop’s text, and the eager and burning words which followed it had taken root in the inflammable imaginations of the choir class, whose close attention and blameless conduct generally, on the occasions of its Chief Pastor’s Visitations of St. Michael’s, would have aroused dark fears of its speedy and untimely end in the breasts of those unfamiliar with it in its normal state.

Christie McCourt, its versatile leader, and Charlie Stolter, its admired “Dare-devil” (proud title, bestowed for preëminence in all feats of mischief) were taking a short cut to the church the following Sunday, through a shady lane bordered with high box hedges, when they suddenly descried, seated on a stone, and punching aimless holes in the moss,

their deadly enemy of the Sunday-school across the way, one Jimmy Knight.

The young St. Michaels were instantly on their defense, but the enemy seemed strangely lacking in spirit. He showed no sign of impending battle.

"P'raps he's sick," whispered the tender-hearted Dare-devil, and the two approached in wary silence. Still no menace from the enemy. By this time, ordinarily, the welkin would have rung with the shouts of war.

Even Christie began to feel anxious. "Anything the matter?" he ventured, tentatively.

Could it be possible that a sniff, long and loud, was proceeding from under the enemy's cap brim?

Blank consternation now stalked abroad.

"Why, what's eatin' you, Jim?" faltered Charlie, drawing nearer.

"Fired!"

"From Sunday-school?"

"Yes—because another feller said I hooked his pennies, 'n I didn't."

The young St. Michaels were not proof against this demand upon their chivalry. All

their latent sympathy with the down-trodden and oppressed sprang into instant vitality. Feuds were forgotten.

"Sure you didn't—*we* know that. But ain't you goin' there any more?"

"You bet I ain't!"

A wonderful light of clear inward vision was dawning upon the faces before him. They looked at each other—a common inspiration gleaming from their eyes.

"'N even a *hedge*!" said Charlie, in an awed whisper.

"We *gotter* do it!" responded Christie, with equal fervour.

"Say, Jim," he began, tactfully, "if you ain't goin' anywheres else, what's the matter with your comin' with us?"

"Don't want any more old Sunday-schools—had enough," glowered the misanthrope.

"Well, you *gotter* come anyway, whether you want to or not," declared the ardent and less diplomatic Dare-devil; "we're goin' to *compel* you."

"Compel! What d'yer mean?"

"'Compel—to constrain by force,'" quoted

Christie. "I looked it up in the dictionary. It means we've gotter *make* you come along with us—the Bishop said so. Now, will you come without fightin', or have we got to lick you first?"

"I ain't goin' to no Sunday-school," persisted the victim of unjust suspicion, his wrongs rankling afresh.

"Yes you are—ketch hold of him, Charlie, 'n I'll take his other arm. Come on, now."

"I won't! Here, you let me alone!"

The enemy began to look more natural.

"You're comin' if we have to soak you one—I don't know but we oughter, anyway—the Bishop didn't say whether compelling went 's far's *that*—but I guess we needn't, unless you kick too hard."

Kick was precisely the term for the enemy's actions at the moment. Right and left flew his agile legs, with devastating effect upon the missionaries.

"I'll sure *have* to soak him just a *little* one," deprecated Christie, suiting the action to the word; "*now* will you come along?"

"Gee! What a lump!" exclaimed the

Dare-devil, aghast, and, indeed, a convincing testimony to the strength of the hand of ecclesiastical discipline was already beginning to appear on the forehead of the reluctant convert.

"*You* come on, 'n have it out! I kin lick the two of you with one hand," sneered the enemy, now completely himself again.

"We can't—we gotter go to Sunday-school—but, aw say, Jim, you come along with us now—it's awful nice," insinuated the resourceful Christie, suddenly changing his tactics.

"'N it's only twenty minutes, 'n Miss Chalmers, she's a dandy teacher!" augmented the Dare-devil, taking his cue from his leader.

The "dandy teacher," looking up from her books a little later, was somewhat startled at the picture of a small, red-headed, freckle-faced figure, which she at once recognized for the enemy, securely supported on either side by her own two charges.

"We compelled him to come in," exulted Charlie, glowing with the satisfaction of the good and faithful servant, and confidently



“ Ketch hold of him, Charlie, 'n I'll take his other arm—
Come on now ! ”

expecting a "well done." "He's got fired from his own Sunday-school."

"Oh, good-morning, Jimmy," returned Miss Chalmers, tactfully ignoring the dark flush which followed this humiliating revelation. "I'm very glad to see you. Don't you *want* to come in?"

"Sure he don't!" broke in Christie; "we had to *compel* him, like the Bishop said—look at that lump!"

Miss Chalmers was not naturally obtuse, but she always found it necessary before starting for Sunday-school to get out her complete set of wits and sharpen them up, ready for instant action, of whatever nature the anticipated emergency might demand.

Jumping, therefore, at once to the right connection between the group before her, and the eloquent sermon of the Bishop, and suspending sentence to a more convenient season, she released the overzealous missionaries from further spiritual effort, and took command of the "compelling" situation herself.

"Well, Jimmy, do you know, I really wish you *would* come in for a few moments anyway.

These crayons are all mixed up, and if you wouldn't mind straightening out the different colours for me, it would be a great help. And, boys, you know it's manners when we have visitors, to offer refreshments, so I'll ask Jerome to pass this maple sugar before we begin—take that nice light piece, Jimmy—I'm so glad you happened in this particular morning, because we haven't had a Choral Celebration to-day, and the boys are all fresh for the lesson. Who's going to draw the picture?"

"Let me—let me!" responded the choir class, eagerly—drawing being popular.

"I'll take Allie this time, and the rest can tell him if he leaves out anything. Will you hold the crayons, Jimmy? Go on, Allie."

The visitor began to relax to the extent first, of partially forgetting himself—next, of taking a faint interest in his surroundings. What was Allie trying to do? He selected a blue crayon and daubed some waving blue lines across the top of the board. At the bottom, he put a dozen irregular brownish bundles, surrounded by streaks of green, and with

capital J's sprinkled indiscriminately among them. In the middle distance, he drew two long wobbling strokes, reaching to the top of the board, joined by cross-bars.

Then, casting a self-satisfied glance over his handiwork, he sat down, and looked about for appreciation.

"You forgot the angels," prompted the choir class in unison.

"Oh, so I did," returned Allie, unabashed, adding to the cross-bars a number of white semicircles, meeting in pairs, like eyebrows, and surmounting them with large A's.

"What does it mean?" ventured the visitor, unable to repress his curiosity.

"Explain it, Charlie."

"Why, it's Jacob's Dream. Those brown stones are his pillow, 'n the angels goin' up 'n down the ladder are what he saw."

"*That* a ladder!" exclaimed the visitor, native honesty triumphing over acquired politeness. "Why, it couldn't hold up a fly! 'N what's it restin' against?"

"A heavy cloud, I guess," said Allie, hastily daubing in an extra one.

"I rather think you can draw, Jimmy," interrupted the observing Miss Chalmers, on the lookout for the point of contact; "suppose *you* put in the ladder."

Now, entirely forgetful of his self-consciousness, the young visitor eagerly seized a crayon, and, in a trice, a ladder that "could be climbed up" had arisen in accurate perspective from among the brown bundles, while with a few masterly strokes, the white eyebrows depending from its rungs had been transformed into drooping, feathered wings.

"Gee!" chorused the choir class, in stunned admiration.

"Why, Jimmy, you're a real artist! That makes a different thing of it; you must have an uncommonly true eye. Suppose, now, you draw the whole picture, while Christie tells the story."

"All right, I'd just as soon," murmured the artist, tasting the sweets of success, and endeavouring to conceal his pride.

"Jacob, he ——" began Christie.

"Just a moment," interposed Miss Chalmers. "Carl, your pocket's moving—what have you got in it?"

"Mice," returned Carl Ellis, daringly. He was one of the younger boys, whose exceptional powers of mimicry had raised him high in the estimation of the choir class, quick to acknowledge talent. But Carl had not as yet quite assimilated the lesson—fairly well digested by his fellows—that there is a time for all things.

To Jimmy, the incident promised the most interesting results. The audacity of it appealed to his nature, and the certainty that, being a girl, Miss Chalmers' next move would be to jump on a chair and scream, lent an element of humour, peculiarly attractive to the masculine mind. What was his amazement, therefore, when that calm and self-possessed young woman dismissed the subject (incidentally taking the wind completely out of the intending mischief-maker's sails) with a quiet :—

"Put the little things in that empty bird cage outside the door till after the lesson, then we would all like to watch them. Go on, Christie, you've only five minutes."

And before the visitor had time to do any

sort of justice to himself as an artist, the lesson was at an end.

“Now we’ll sing—‘Jerusalem the golden’—you know that, Jimmy—and then we must go. Christie and Charlie may wait.”

“What a sweet voice you have,” went on Miss Chalmers, as she shook hands with her guest at the door; “you don’t know how much I’ve enjoyed your visit. You must try and forgive Christie and Charlie for *making* you come. They didn’t quite understand the Bishop’s sermon—I’m going to explain it to them now so they won’t forget it! I’m so sorry we couldn’t have seen more of your drawing. Next Sunday we have Daniel in the Lions’ Den—I’m afraid the boys won’t be able to make much of Daniel—and their animals always look like saw-horses with tails stuck on. *Good-bye*. Thank you for coming.”

The visitor went slowly out—hesitated—flushed scarlet—and turned back—the passion of emulation flaming in his eyes.

“If—if you’d like to have me—I’d just as soon come and help next Sunday as not,” said he.

VI

THE NEW RECRUIT

“**S**AY, fellers, that cross on top of the church would make a bully target—betcher I can hit it first time!” boasted Jimmy Knight, whose mistaken father had recently presented him with a shotgun, the envy of his old-time enemies.

To his amazement, this alluring proposition was received in blank silence, and with looks of frozen horror by the usually responsive choir class.

“W-w-why,” he stammered, “wh-what’s the matter?”

Christie, the class leader, possessed with the courage of his convictions, and never at all backward in expressing himself, voiced the general sentiment:—

“Why, that’s our flag,” he explained firmly, “’n no one but traitors are so low down as to fire on their flag.”

“O-oh—well,” retorted the new recruit, try-

ing to cover up his embarrassment with an assumption of easy indifference, "let's fire at Mr. Merrick's weather-vane, then—that's more fun, anyway."

The choir class having no ecclesiastical scruples regarding weather-vanes, they all hurried across the neighbouring gardens, and turned their attention to the fine copy of a famous trotter, named for the great revolutionary patriot, Ethan Allen, which Mr. Merrick, whose misfortune it was to live near St. Michael's, had recently added to the tower of his stable, and of which he was very proud.

Bang! Around spun Ethan Allen, as a bullet from the shotgun went through his tail.

"Pretty good shot, wasn't it?" exulted Jimmy.

"Bully! Let me try," pleaded Christie, awed into meekness by the astounding prowess of his late rival.

But his aim went wide of the mark, and no exciting gyrations followed. Jimmy was generous, and each of his new comrades was allowed his turn at the gun, but their lack of success was so marring to the interest of the

occasion, that the owner was urged to resume his treasure and to go on providing amusement for the party. Not in vain had been his big brother's coaching. Jimmy was an excellent shot, and soon poor Ethan Allen was riddled full of holes, and so confused in his mind that he had no idea which way the wind was blowing, or where he ought to point.

"Go on—keep it up—that's a dandy one!" shrieked the delighted choir class, dancing about in its glee.

"Well—what won't you young devils be up to next? Worst set in town! But I've caught you red-handed this time, and you'll pay up, too. That vane cost me fifteen dollars."

A harsh, unfeeling voice broke in upon their revelry. It was the voice of Mr. Merrick, and it sounded not only angry, but in dead earnest.

Consternation replaced guileless merriment, and the detected culprits turned to each other in mute consultation.

"Come now—who's at the bottom of this? Whose gun is it?"

If Mr. Merrick had been any judge of boys, he would have known the real criminal at once by his panic-stricken looks. But, not being gifted in that direction, and having had some experience of the choir class as a neighbour, he pitched on the ones upon whom he had usually found it safe to lay the responsibility of all pranks.

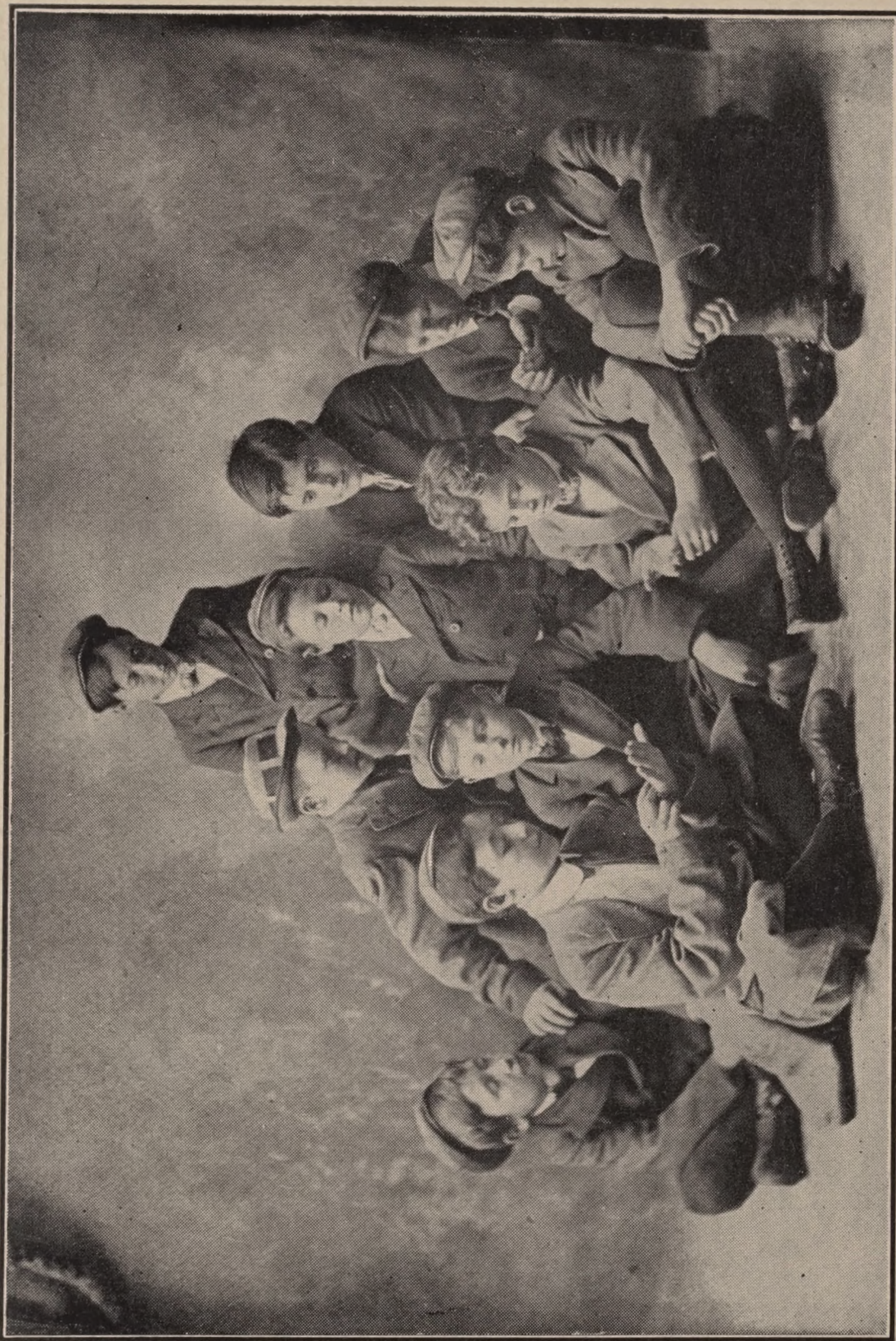
"Here you, Chris McCourt, and Charlie Stolter—I'll teach you to spoil my vane. If that fifteen dollars isn't paid by to-morrow, I'll have you arrested. That's all. Scat!"

Like a flock of (black) sheep, fled the choir class ignominiously to the shelter of its own churchyard, where it threw itself down on the bank for a council of war.

"Say, fellers," began the new recruit, "it was awful white of you not to tell on me—but how'm I ever goin' to git that fifteen?"

"*You* git?" returned the class leader, superbly, "how's the whole bunch of us goin' to git it? We're all in it, 'n of course we wouldn't tell on you—we ain't sneaks—see?"

"But it's my gun, 'n beside *I* did all the hitting," persisted Jimmy, with pardonable pride,



“How’re we ever going to raise that fifteen dollars?”

which even yawning prison bars could not down.

"But we all *tried* to hit it, 'n that's just as bad, Mr. Tilson would say," argued Allie; "guess we'll have to tell him about it."

"Who's Mr. Tilson?"

"Why, he's *our* curate—the one we all go to about things."

"He's awful good," put in the Dare-devil; "he knows just what a feller means without his sayin' it."

"Gee! he does, 'n he's done all the things we have, too," contributed the class leader.

"Sure, he was a choir boy himself, 'n worse 'n we are, *he says*," added Willie Crosby, incredulously.

"He goes off walkin' 'n swimmin' with us, too, 'n he's substitute on our nine," climaxed Jerome Moran.

"How d'you mean—substitute?" Jimmy's eyes were getting bigger and bigger.

"Why, he can play any position if any of the fellers gives out, 'n he can pitch three curves."

"'N we always have one of our nine sick

when we play the altar boys," finished Billy Wells, ingenuously.

The new recruit was taking in rather more fresh ideas than he could assimilate, and the appearance of the popular curate was a welcome interruption.

"Say, Mr. Tilson," began the ever ready class leader, "we're in trouble."

"What's the matter now?" returned Mr. Tilson, resignedly. "Miss Chalmers been 'shaking' you again?"

"We've shot up Mr. Merrick's Ethan Allen," went on Christie, too much in earnest for pleasantry, "'n if we don't pay fifteen dollars by to-morrow, he'll have Charlie 'n me arrested. I wonder why he hit on us," he added, with an innocent look which did not deceive the experienced curate.

"You young rascal! But *did* you do it?"

"No, sir—but we was *in* it."

"Well, who *did*—no, never mind," he interrupted himself, hastily, "of course you couldn't tell—and, anyway, I know every one of you was jumping around, wishing he *could* do it."

The choir class hung its head at this home thrust.

"But what'll we *do*, Mr. Tilson?" faltered the Dare-devil. "I ain't got but seventy-five cents."

"I'll have to think it over. I'm going to my study now for an hour, and I'll tell you later on what I decide. Of course every one of you must take hold and help pay."

"Sure," returned the choir class, as the curate turned to leave.

"And of course, too," he added, "you know whoever really *did* do it will feel mean till he owns up."

An embarrassed silence followed his departure. No one looked at Jimmy.

"Wh-what does he mean?" asked the true culprit.

For the first time in his experience of him, his old enemy, Christie, seemed at a loss for words.

"Well," he finally advised, "I guess if I was you, I'd go to his study 'n tell him all about it."

"But he'll fire me sure if I tell him."

"No, he won't—not if you own up," reassured the Dare-devil; "we've done lots worse things than that—but you feel awful mean if you don't tell."

An emphatic murmur of confirmation rose from the reminiscent choir class.

"Go on in, Jim," urged Allie, "'n git it over—he's awful nice—'n then we can git to work plannin' how we're goin' to raise the money."

"Oh, that you, Jimmy?" called out a brisk, cheerful voice to a small, red-headed, white and freckle-faced figure, which seemed endeavouring to shrink through the floor. "Come in, old chap; you're just in time to tell me about these flies. What do you think of them? I hear you're a great fisherman. Do you know whether there are any good trout streams out Wickopee way?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I know some bul—some fine ones, 'n those flies are dandy!"

"Well, that's great now. I was thinking of taking a day off next Saturday with the choir boys, fishing, and I wonder if you couldn't

show us a new place. We would get an early start and be gone all day—can you, do you think?”

“Gee! I mean, yes, sir—only ——” The flush which had overspread the white and freckled countenance died away, as, with a pang, the culprit recalled his mission to the study.

“Oh, Mr. Tilson ——” he began, huskily.

“And are you fond of other sports?” went on the curate, artfully; “good shot, perhaps? Better than Christie and the rest?”

“You *bet* I am! Chris, *he* can’t hit *anything!*”

“Oh! Well, you know part of a soldier’s business is to be a good marksman. We want our boys to be good at everything—games and sports and athletics—and even lessons! [Jimmy tried to smile politely.] I have been thinking of asking the rector to let me start an archery club—then the little fellows could be in it, and we could have some great matches. Could you help me about this, do you think?”

Poor Jimmy! The more this smiling, free and easy young man drew these enticing pictures, the more he wanted to stay in a Sunday-

school which offered such a wonderfully congenial field for his peculiar talents, and the less he wanted to "tell" and "be fired."

But Jimmy came of good stock, and his courage was a match for Christie's own. Shutting his eyes, and taking the fatal plunge at one leap, his trembling lips faltered:—

"Mr. Tilson, *I* did it."

"Oh, did you?" returned the curate, quietly; "well now, that's too bad. What made you think of it?"

A terrible wave of recollection submerged the unfortunate new recruit, as he now saw himself swept away beyond rescue, but, with a desperate impulse to drive all the nails in his coffin at once and have it over, he stammered:—

"I was goin' to shoot up the cross on the church, but the fellers wouldn't let me, 'n Christie said it was their flag."

A gleam of gratification shone for an instant on the curate's face, as he said:—

"Christie is a pretty good soldier, but he didn't object at all to ruining Mr. Merrick's vane, did he?"

"N-no—sir, I didn't hear him, but he might have—I guess I wanted to do it all right."

Half an hour later a red-haired, freckled, but no longer white-faced Jimmy burst into the council of war.

"Say, fellers, Mr. Tilson, he's a dandy, 'n I'm goin' right over to Mr. Merrick, 'n ask him to give me a week to pay up in, 'n he thinks he knows a way to raise the money."

"If you go, we all go," announced the class leader, with finality; "we're all in on this—Mr. Tilson said so."

"Sure we are!" shouted the loyal choir class.

"Give you a week's time, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Merrick, "you young scamps! And you won't tell who did it? I guess *not!*"

"*I* did it," up spoke Jimmy, pale again, but determined; "but I'll pay you in a week."

It was out—and the choir class stood breathless, awaiting its sentence.

To its amazement, the hard, iron face relaxed, the muscles around the mouth twitched, the stern eyes twinkled.

"Oh, *you* did it, did you? Well, I *ought* to have you arrested, but so long as you've owned up, and so long as it wasn't those two imps, I guess I'll have to let you off this time."

But Mr. Merrick reckoned without his choir class. Its honour was touched.

"No, *sir!*" exclaimed its leader, "we was all in it, 'n we spoiled Ethan Allen, 'n we're goin' to pay that fifteen dollars if it takes all summer!"



“ What’s Jim Knight doing over here? ”

VII

A DEBT OF HONOUR

“**S**AY, what’s Jim Knight doing over here?”

The speaker was Georgie Childs, just back from six weeks in New York, and his curiosity was pardonable, since when he left, the choir class and Jimmy had been deadly enemies.

“Oh, he’s one of *us* now—Christie ’n Charlie brought him in,” explained several eager voices, while admiring and envious glances were cast on the two missionaries. The objects of envy looked at each other somewhat sheepishly. Not altogether satisfactory had been Miss Chalmers’ point of view in regard to their zeal.

“He got fired from his own Sunday-school, but Mr. Tilson went over and saw his clergyman, ’n now he’s here,” continued the explanation.

(For good and sufficient reason, the explanation omitted any detailed account of this deci-

sive interview, which had concluded with :—
“Take him, my dear fellow, you’re welcome, I make you a present of him,”—from Jimmy’s clergyman, who was young and sportive and, —“Well, whatever he is, he can’t match mine,” —from Mr. Tilson, equally young and equally sportive.)

“’N we gotter pay fifteen dollars because he shot up Mr. Merrick’s Ethan Allen vane—(but we was all in it),”—went on the recital—
“’n we don’t know how we’re goin’ to raise the money.”

“Get up a minstrel show,” advised Georgie, fresh from metropolitan successes. “I went to a dandy one that St. Xantippe’s Trade School had.”

“Could we do it?”

“Easy. They don’t have any one blacked up now but the end men.”

“I speak to be end man,” piped the choir class in unison.

“They only have two, but the rest sit around and do stunts just the same. I’d pick Jim for one end ’n me for the other. Christie’d better be the middle man that says what’s comin’.

We'd have to have some singing, 'n Allie could do that violin solo the rector's always making him play in the offertory." Georgie had the instinct of a true stage manager.

"We'll have to ask Mr. Tilson," warned the experienced Allie.

"All right then, let's do it now. I saw him walking up Terrace Street—we can catch him if we hurry."

And accordingly Mr. Tilson, decorously paying his usual afternoon round of visits, suddenly found himself the centre of a swarming mass of small boys, which precipitated itself upon him like an avalanche.

"Minstrel show—black up—fifteen dollars," were at first the only words he caught, but gradually the excited tongues grew more coherent, and he was able to gather a reasonably clear idea of the project.

"Why yes, I don't see any objection to it," he finally announced; "but what have you got for your programme?"

"Oh, Georgie's just seen a show they had in a big parish in New York, 'n he says he can remember enough to tell us."

"But can you get it up by yourselves, do you think?"

"Oh, yes, sir, we'd rather. Georgie's auntie'll help us."

"All right then—go ahead," and the busy curate went briskly on his way, congratulating himself that Georgie had selected such an excellent source from which to draw his inspiration.

For several weeks the choir class was mysteriously exclusive. All its spare minutes were spent in rehearsing under Georgie's able direction.

At the outset, indeed, disaster threatened the entire enterprise in the seemingly insuperable obstacle of no one being willing to perform unless he could be end man, and it was only by fine diplomacy and the strategic proposition that every one should "black up," that a pacifying compromise was effected. But, this difficulty once surmounted, the stage manager had no further trouble.

"Oh, Mr. Tilson," called out Charlie, one day after Sunday-school, "how do you begin your letters to the Bishop?"

“‘My dear Bishop,’” returned the curate, absently, hurrying by, on a sick call.

“We sure want him,” declared Christie; “let’s do it right now.”

And the result of much consideration and painstaking effort reached its destination the following day.

“OUR DEAR BISHOP : ” (it read)—

“We want you to come to our show. We shot up Mr. Merrick’s weather-vane, and we’re going to have the show to pay for it. So we send you these few lines to invite you to come. It’s going to be next Tuesday night.

“Your loving friends,

“THE CHOIR CLASS.

“P. S. We want you awful bad, so please, dear Bishop, do come.”

“Ah, Mr. Judson,” observed the Bishop, looking up from his mail, “kindly cancel that appointment for next Tuesday. I find I am called in another direction that evening.”

At last the eventful night arrived. All the tickets had been sold and the large room was crowded. In the centre, in front of the stage, stood an armchair for the Bishop, who, sur-

rounded by the rector and curates, was holding an informal reception before the performance.

"Of course I shouldn't think of taking the little chaps' money," Mr. Merrick was saying, "but it shows their grit to go ahead in this way."

"Of course you *will* take it," put in Mr. Tilson; "it would upset all my teaching if you didn't."

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Merrick," added the Bishop, "the boys must be taught to pay their debts of honour."

"Besides, their self-respect would be deeply injured if you refused," concluded the curate.

Meantime, behind the scenes wild confusion reigned. Georgie's auntie, her hands dipped in black, sticky stuff, stood patiently rubbing them over the faces and throats of the artists, trying to cover as much of the surface as their wriggling owners would permit. The ensemble was perhaps not strictly speaking harmonious, no two ears being the same hue and the widest latitude prevailing as to noses. But a pleasing variety was effected by coal black

cheeks and light chocolate coloured features, or vice versa, and, in any case, as Georgie philosophically observed, if they weren't all black, they certainly were distinctly not white.

Tremendous excitement, almost to desperation, was obtaining in the choir room, where Howard, the tall crucifer of the acolytes, whose well-known histrionic talents had, by special entreaty, been pressed into the service, was futilely struggling with the complicated street attire in which as Miss Cloy he was to captivate the spectators.

Almost equal in intensity were the heroic efforts of Christie, the Interlocutor, to keep the long points of his high collar from getting into his eyes, and his whiskers from parting company altogether with his chin. A tall beaver hat, a long coat and heavy-rimmed horn spectacles completed this imposing make up.

In a separate room the satin glories of the two "hired" costumes—one vivid green, the other scarlet—were being strenuously adjusted to the rigid angles of the favoured end men, Jimmy and Georgie. Knee-breeches and

dress coats, ruffles, long silk stockings and white gloves were among the accessories of these creations, and so dazzling was the effect that the performance threatened to come to an end before it had commenced, owing to the piercing jealousy of the rest of the cast, to whom slimness of exchequer permitted only "home-made" habiliments.

Even Christie, who was just now experiencing the pangs of first and unrequited love for Charlie's eldest sister, a pretty young woman of about the same age as Miss Chalmers, felt a cold chill in the region of his heart. For would not Meta, being a girl, and therefore susceptible to fripperies, fall a victim to such alluring raiment?

But the pride of acting finally dominated all lesser emotions, and by the time Georgie's auntie had carefully blackened out the white channels left by sundry rivulets of tears, all was in readiness for the curtain.

St. Michael's Choir Class

Parish House

Tuesday Evening, Aug. 10th

Programme**DARKTOWN MINSTREL BAND**

INTERLOCUTOR

MR. CHRISTOPHER McCOURT**End Men**

Claude	-	-	-	-	-	George Childs
Sambo	-	-	-	-	-	James Knight

Funmakers

Miss Cloy	-	-	-	-	-	Howard Townsend
Ginger	-	-	-	-	-	Jerome Moran
Mr. Snow	-	-	-	-	-	Alson Jay Dugan
Zeke	-	-	-	-	-	Charles Stolter
Reuben	-	-	-	-	-	William Wells

Songs

1. Opening Chorus, My Dream of the U. S. A.,
Entire Company
2. Solo - - I Wish I had a Girl, Mr. George Childs
3. Solo Violin - - Melodie, Rubenstein, Mr. Alson Dugan
4. Duet, Swing Me Higher Obadiah, }
Mr. Charles Stolter
Mr. William Wells
5. Closing Chorus, Much Obligated to You, Entire Company

Second Part

GRAND VAUDEVILLE ENTERTAINMENT,

BY THE ENTIRE COMPANY.

*Printing Press of
"The Parish Echo."
Orders respectfully
solicited.*

The entire printing staff of the *Parish Echo* had spent itself on the production of two dozen programmes which were obligingly passed around until the audience had a fairly good idea of what was before them, and a pleased murmur of expectation arose as Mr. Burke, the choirmaster, came forward and, taking his seat at the piano, struck up the strains of a lively march to which the curtain slowly and with many jerks arose.

A gasp of admiration dissolved into "ohs" and "ahs" mingled with vociferous hand clapping, for the stage revealed the entire company—at least as many of it as might be squeezed into the front row. In the rear, between elbows and shoulders could be descried a bevy of bobbing heads belonging to the chorus, whose voices entitled them to that honour, but for whom the limitations of the stage precluded visibility.

Considerable ingenuity was required in taking seats without tipping over into the audience, but, this feat once accomplished and the performers having conquered the temptation to smile at their friends over the footlights, the

entertainment swung into full brilliancy with the burning question :—

“ Say, Mr. Johnsing, kin yoh tell me what am de difference between a egg and a elephant ? ”—and the appreciative listeners settled down to eager anticipation.

The opening chorus went off with much spirit, and Claude “ wished he had a girl ” with such convincing ardour that Miss Cloy felt encouraged to offer herself in that capacity, and was only persuaded to return to her place beside Sambo after the most marked and humiliating rebuffs.

When quiet had once more been restored the Interlocutor rose to announce :—

“ The next number, ladies and gentlemen, will be a violin solo by Mr. Snow.”

His cheeks flaming a rich crimson through the thin coating of black, Allie came forward, while Mr. Burke sounded the key. The rector’s eyes brightened as the young player’s bow struck into the solo he always loved to hear him give in church.

Tremendous applause followed, and Mr. Snow bowed again and again, looking appeal-

ingly at Christie, until that leader holding up his hand for silence, declared firmly that :—" We can't give any encores because we don't know any "—which conclusive utterance produced the desired effect and the entertainment was allowed to proceed.

The " conversation " consisted principally of impromptu dialogues between the two end men, who, from diligent consultation of the joke columns in the papers, supplemented by Georgie's recollections of the St. Xantippe programme, had constructed the " text " and were, in consequence, perfectly able to reinforce each and any part, or to fill them all if occasion demanded ; a fortunate circumstance, for excitement drove the majority of their lines from the young heads beneath the woolly wigs. Ginger and Reuben required constant prompting by their comrades, while an agonizing attack of stage fright rendered Zeke entirely speechless when addressed by the Interlocutor, whose ensuing hoarse whisper : " You take it, Jim," was plainly audible to the farthest corner of the room.

However, trifling blemishes of this sort

were more than atoned for by the singing, and Obadiah had to be repeatedly swung higher and higher, with appropriate gestures—in which Miss Cloy towered aloft over the rest of the cast like a young fir tree—amid tumultuous enthusiasm.

Indeed, this attractive maiden bridged over many an awkward pause between the Interlocutor's: "Well, Ginger, who wuz dat sho' 'nuff peach yoh all was glidin' up Main Street with last night," and the hastily substituted reply of Claude or Sambo, by her artless flirtations with admirers in the audience. Singing was not one of Howard's strong points, but in pantomime he excelled, and a good-natured desire to help out the little fellows inspired him to scintillating feats which the spectators seemingly appreciated to the full.

The closing chorus equalled the opening one in sprightliness and interest, and the delighted performers hurried off the stage to have as much of the burnt cork as could be induced to come off, removed from such of the faces as were to reappear white in the Grand Vaude-

ville Entertainment which was to be the cream of the mental feast.

"What's this? What's this? Sign it? Sign what?" exclaimed Mr. Merrick in some natural surprise, as a deputation from behind the scenes pressed a sealed envelope upon him.

"It's a receipt—please take the money—'n we're awful sorry," faltered the deputation.

Mr. Merrick, thus urged, broke the seal, and took out three five dollar bills, a ten cent piece, and a folded paper which read:

"Received from the choir class, fifteen dollars and ten cents (\$15.10), in full payment, with interest, for spoiling Ethan Allen."

"We didn't know how to fix up the interest, but we thought ten cents was about right, 'n Howard wrote the receipt."

Mr. Merrick glanced at the Bishop, whose face was evidently struggling not to twitch—then at the curate, who stood, perfectly grave, by his chair.

"If you'll sign here, Mr. Merrick," said he, "I know the boys will feel greatly relieved—and I don't think you will ever be troubled by

them again—at least not in that way! Will he, boys?”

“No, sir—thank you, sir—but Ethan *did* look awful funny!”

And the deputation flew back to impart the glad tidings of release from debt to its fellow conspirators, before the curtain went up on the second part.

The stage was empty, but from one side came the rollicking notes of a jig, and Allie, in white knickerbockers, with a scarlet sash about his waist, entered with his violin. On went the jig, and in burst a small, black-faced figure in red, its nimble feet dancing a clog. It was Georgie, and his proficiency in this direction had long been the envy of his fellows. As he paused for breath, on from the other side rushed another small black face in short red skirts. The agility of Jimmy's legs was already familiar to certain of his sometime enemies, but on this occasion they outdid themselves, and the two scarlet figures danced and whirled and spun, while Allie played faster and faster, till all rushed off breathless, amid thunders of applause.

Next came Carl Ellis, whose powers of mimicry had won for him respect and distinction. At his command a cat fought and scratched and spit—a dog growled and yelped and snarled—until at last a battle royal raged between the two.

Long and loud was the clapping, and Carl was recalled again and again.

Following him came a shy little maid, in a pink dress and sunbonnet matching her cheeks, under which the dark blue eyes of Christie smiled mischievously. Advancing to the front of the stage, the little maid kissed her hand and curtsied, as she prepared to recite the touching history of "Little Willie," who:—

" had a purple monkey,
Climbing on a yellow stick,
And when he sucked the paint all off
It made him very sick."

Christie's voice shook with emotion at the last verse:—

" Oh, no more he'll shoot his sister
With his little wooden gun.
No more he'll pull the pussy's tail
To make her howl for fun.

The pussy's tail now stands out straight,
The gun is laid aside,
The monkey doesn't jump around,
Since Little Willie died."

This affecting poem met with tumultuous applause, and Christie was recalled again and again.

The next number was a very pretty juggling act with Indian clubs by Jerome Moran and Billy Wells, whose assiduous devotion to the gymnasium of late now explained itself. Back and forth flew the gayly coloured missiles—red, green and gold—with an accuracy which reflected great credit on the young athletes. Only hard work could have produced the practiced eye—the trained muscles—which gave the effect of such careless grace and ease.

The audience showed a generous appreciation of the feats, and the lads bowed repeatedly in gratified response.

Next came an India rubber ball—or what, from its agility, would seem to be one. It bounded up and down, and spun back and forth in the most astounding manner. True, it wore scarlet knickers above a pair of legs

of the same vivid hue, and it was surmounted by an honest, freckled face and fiery hair, bearing a strong resemblance to Jimmy. It walked on its hands, turned back somersaults, and wound up by a succession of cart-wheels around and around the stage, till the admiring spectators grew dizzy.

Great enthusiasm greeted this exhibition, and deep was the envy of every small boy in the audience. Jimmy, endeavouring to conceal his pride, received his well earned applause with a smiling countenance, and did not altogether regret, as he should have done, the indiscretion which had led him to use Mr. Merrick's weather-vane as a target.

He was finally allowed to depart, and in stole a small Highland lad and lassie, singing:—

“Gin a body meet a body
Comin' through the rye.”

It was Willie Crosby and Charlie and they acted out the familiar words with much spirit. Very coy was Willie, the pretty little lassie, as she coquetted and danced about the laddie. An animated Highland Fling ended this del-

A flash of inspiration shot through the class leader :—

“Give it to the Bishop!”

“Bully!” shouted the others; “let’s do it right now.”

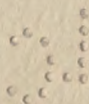
And the Bishop’s informal reception was interrupted by a procession of small and excited persons who formed themselves in line before him, bursting with eagerness.

“Please, sir,” began Christie, breathlessly, “we want you to take this—it’s thirty dollars—and build a church with it.”

“Yes, sir—we all do,” heartily chorused the beaming choir class.

The Bishop smiled, then grew serious.

“My boys,” he said, “it does me good to have you think of this. And now I’ll tell you what I would like to do. I don’t really need any thirty dollar churches just now—but I do need more choir classes exactly like this one. So if you are sure you want me to take the money you have earned, I know of a poor little parish up in the mountains where they haven’t any choir boys, and they could start a class at once if they had this.”





“ An now he’s one of us ”

“ Oh, yes, sir—we do, sir.”

“ Very well then—and thank you heartily, every one of you—and we’ll call it ‘ St. Michael’s Choir Class ’ ! ” And he shook each eager little hand with a warm pressure.

“ Ain’t he awful nice ? ” exclaimed Jimmy, the new recruit, as the young performers sped back to their quarters.

“ You bet he is—he’s *our* Bishop ! ” shouted the emotional choir class.

The passion of loyalty suddenly awoke in the breast of the once deadly enemy :—

“ He’s *mine*, too ! ” he shouted back, with an ardour that matched their own.

VIII

MORE TROUBLE

“**H**ALT! Who goes there?”

“A friend.”

“Advance, friend, and give the countersign.”

“Tadpoles and pollywogs.”

“Shin up.”

At the last command a rope descended from a yawning hole in the darkness overhead, by means of which the impatient aspirant wriggled himself up to the delectable regions above.

The place was Mr. Daskins' barn chamber; the occasion, a regular meeting of the “Fifteen Jolly Gnashers,” entrance to and egress from whose sanctum was effected by means of the rope only, a process all the more alluring because the staircase stood in full view, and nothing prevented its use but the unwritten law.

This mysterious and popular secret society

was open to choir boys alone. The altar boys were rigidly excluded, to their outward derision, but inward envious desire. Such was their feeling on the subject, that they had several times laid a petition before that high court of appeals, Mr. Tilson, praying for its dispersion, on the ground of its being a hot-bed for the inception and propagation of all darkly mischievous plots. Mr. Tilson, however, had thus far declined to exercise his prerogative, finding it expedient to utilize the blind spot in his eye, until the pranks should become too glaringly prominent.

After an unusually brisk session, at which the well-known fertility of the class leader, Christie McCourt, had outdone itself in enticing propositions for future action, the highly pleased "Jolly Gnashers" slid down from their perch, and prepared to work off their exuberant spirits in a harmless game of hare and hounds.

The afternoon was cloudy and energetic running was in accord with every one's feelings. Cheeks grew rosy and voices high and shrill. At last, after a hard and breathless

chase, the hares took refuge in a friendly stable, whose door stood invitingly ajar as they rushed, hard pressed, around a corner. Into it they tore, slamming and bolting the door behind them, and throwing themselves panting and laughing upon a mound of hay. Up came the hounds in full cry, and catching the scent from a stray cap, dropped in the hasty scramble, traced the hares to their temporary refuge. With bangs and shouts they besieged the sanctuary.

“Oh, look, fellers!” whispered Charlie, the leader of the hares, pointing to a barrel of apples.

Words were unnecessary. More than suggestive were the fine, mellow, soft and “squishy” missiles—ammunition right to their hand. Each hare, arming himself forthwith with as many as his pocket could contain, the besieged prepared to become the besiegers.

“What makes them so quiet?” whispered Allie, apprehensively.

“They’re foxy, ’n Christie’s got some game up his sleeve,” returned Charlie. “Now then, when I say three, let’s throw open the door and let fly.”

“Gee! It’s bully!” responded the chuckling band.

“One—two—three!”

Wide open flew the gates of the citadel, followed simultaneously by a deadly fire of projectiles. “Bang—bang!” shouted the delighted hares, rushing out from under cover to exult in the enemy’s downfall.

Horror upon horror! No trace of the hounds could be seen, but in the immediate foreground stood Dr. March, the dignified and elderly Congregational minister, plastered from head to foot with juicy and overripe apples!

Too late the agonized hares remembered that it was Dr. March’s stable in which they had taken refuge. This was no time for parley—only complete and ignominious rout remained. Turning tail, therefore, like frightened squirrels scurried the demoralized hares back to their burrow in the club house of the “Jolly Gnashers.” Without pausing to make use of their chosen mode of entrance, they tore desperately up the usually despised staircase, and descended, screaming and choking, upon the heartless and derisive hounds, who had pre-

ceded them in discreet anticipation of the effect of Dr. March's discovery of the trespassing upon his carefully ordered stable.

"Gee! You *are* in for it now!" they shouted consolingly, in delighted glee, when they heard the fascinating details.

"So're *you*!" retorted the quaking hares. "He'll report us all, 'n we'll all have to make good."

"We might just as well go right down to Mr. Tilson first as last," counselled the sagacious Allie; "he'll get us out of it somehow. But it's fierce havin' it Dr. March we fired into."

"Ain't it?" chorused the others.

"Yes, rector," Mr. Tilson was saying, "I really do think the boys are doing better—they seem to be getting a little more feeling of responsibility. Here it is fully three weeks now since they have done anything startling."

"That was the time, I believe, that Christie and Charlie, after leading the others into Mr. Retting's watermelon patch, slipped out in the darkness and attacked them with whips and

sticks and made them think Mr. Retting had caught them, wasn't it?" returned the rector, laughing.

"Yes—*three* weeks since then, and *two* weeks since they stole the ice-cream I had ordered for the deaf mutes' social," supplemented the Rev. Mr. Rathbone.

"And *one* week since they drank up all Mrs. Broughton's raspberry shrub, just bottled—without any water!" added his colleague, Mr. Townsend. "Wonderful feeling of responsibility, Tilson!"

"Well, you fellows can jeer," retorted the boys' own curate, "but I repeat they *are* boiling down, and I know the rector will back me up, won't you, sir?"

"They're a pretty fair set of little chaps," returned the kind old rector, "and you do mighty well with them, too, my boy," giving the reddening curate a hearty slap on the back.

"Unless my eyes deceive me, here come the trouble hunters now," put in the stiff-necked and unconvinced Mr. Rathbone.

"Well, boys, what's the matter?" asked the rector; "you don't look happy."

“ Please, sir, we want to see Mr. Tilson.”

“ *I* thought so ! ” commented his fellow curates.

“ Well, what’s the matter now ? ” began Mr. Tilson, somewhat half-heartedly.

“ Oh, Mr. Tilson—it’s something awful this time ! ”

“ Suppose you take the boys into your study, Tilson,” interposed the rector ; “ they can talk better there.”

“ Very well, sir. Come on, boys. Now, out with it.”

“ It’s about Dr. March.”

The curate’s face lengthened.

“ What *can* you have been doing to *him* ? ” he exclaimed.

“ Why, we didn’t know he was there, ’n we slammed open the door, ’n ——”

“ He was where ? What door ? ”

“ His stable door.”

“ You in his stable—his new stable that he keeps like a drawing-room ! ”

“ We didn’t think, sir—[“ You never do ! ” groaned the curate] ’n we ran in there, ’n then we took some apples to fire at the fellers.”

"Apples would hurt them!"

"Well, they wasn't *very* hard—they was pretty soft—they'd been ripe a good while——"

"Oh!" exclaimed the curate, on whom a dark cloud was beginning to descend as the potentialities of the event developed.

"'N we thought the fellers was outside," went on the faltering tale, "'n when we banged open the door, we let fly, 'n it wasn't the fellers at all—it was ——"

"Dr. March?" asked the curate, aghast, overwhelmed with a vision of the inevitable after effects.

"Yes, sir—'n what'll we do, sir?"

"Well, I think you deserve a good lesson. You are growing more heedless all the time," returned the justly exasperated curate, ignoring his recent championship, "and you think all you have to do when you get into a scrape, is to come to me to pull you out of it. Now *this* time ——"

"Oh—say—Mr. Tilson—you ain't goin' to shake us, are you?"

Charlie's eyes were very blue and appealing, but Mr. Tilson hardened his heart.

“Yes, this time I’m going to make you work it out for yourselves. The only bright thing I can see is, that you didn’t know it was Dr. March. But you did know you had no business in his stable. The rector will feel terribly mortified on account of Dr. March being another clergyman, and not used to boys, either. Yes, I’m afraid it looks pretty dark for you. You’d better be thinking what you’re going to do about it!” And their own curate, unrelenting and merciless, for the first time turned a cold shoulder on their troubles and left them to their own bitter reflections.

“Let’s go up to the club and talk it over,” advised Allie, faint-heartedly.

And up the commonplace staircase again filed the ghosts of the once *Jolly* Gnashers—too broken in spirit for the exhilarating rope “shinning.”

“Gee! Ain’t it fierce?” exclaimed Georgie Childs.

“Don’t you think he’ll ever take us back?” faltered Jerome Moran.

“We better git busy ’n do what he tells us,” declared the practical Christie.

"What *can* we do?" Willie Crosby's voice presaged tears.

"Do you suppose if we wrote Dr. March a letter or something it would be any good?" ventured Billy Wells, as a forlorn hope.

"Get up a petition," suggested the resourceful Christie.

"'N all sign it," added Georgie, beginning to scent dramatic possibilities.

"How'll we ever draw it up?" asked the prudent Jimmy Knight.

"Howard 'll do it for us, I guess," returned Allie, with inspiration.

"Bully! Let's go ask him now," and the depressed choir class, sustained by this gleam of hope, took sufficient heart of grace to tumble down its favourite rope, on its way to immediate action.

"Say, Howard, can you draw up a petition?" began Allie, tentatively, as the fifteen drew breath at the Townsend's door.

"Guess so—what kind?" replied the tall crucifer, not unfamiliar with the epic of the choir class, and always ready to help out the little fellows.

“Well, it wants to say good ’n big that we didn’t mean to hit Dr. March with rotten apples ——”

“Great Scott! Do you mean to say *that’s* what you’ve done!”

The spirits of the unfortunate choir class once more sank below the surface. With the ecclesiastical point of view they were familiar, but when the secular eye proclaimed itself of the same way of seeing, the realization of their crime came home to them in all its enormity.

“Oh, Howard, help us out—*do!*” entreated the completely subjugated Jolly Gnashers.

“Well, let’s see—you tell me what to put down. I’ll begin it this way:—

“‘To the Rev. G. L. March, D. D.’ (‘That D. D. looks well, too,’ interpolated the writer.) ‘We, St. Michael’s choir class’—(Now you go on)—‘Are very sorry we hit you with those apples’ (Christie) ‘And we ought not to have gone in your stable at all’ (Jerome) ‘But we did—and we won’t again’ (Allie) ‘And please sir, the rector didn’t know it—and he’s feeling very much ashamed—and please don’t blame him’ (Charlie) ‘And Mr. Tilson, he said we



“ Oh, Howard, help us out, do ! ”

must get on without him, because we forgot so many times before, so please excuse mistakes' (Georgie).

"Isn't that about enough?" suggested Howard. "Suppose, now, you all sign it, beginning with Christie, then we'll send it to him by mail." And down went the fifteen names in sprawling letters.

Dignified and precise Dr. March had suffered a severe shock to his feelings, but his heart was younger than his head, and he had not forgotten what it was to be a boy, and when the petition reached him the following morning, he read it with a zest and appreciation which would have raised his drooping and anxious correspondents to the zenith of buoyant hope, had they dreamed of such an impossibility.

They were, however, still among the ranks of the submerged, when, filing sadly and silently out of choir practice that night, they were greeted by Mr. Tilson, his countenance once more turned towards them sympathetically.

"You fellows must have hit on a pretty

good apology to Dr. March," he began, his eyes smiling as of old; "he has written the rector a letter, and there is something in it for you."

"For us! Gee!" screamed the choir class, in excited anticipation, coming suddenly out of its gloom; "what does it say?"

"I'll read it:—

"*To the Rector of St. Michael's Church:*

"MY DEAR BROTHER:—

"I want to congratulate you on having a manly set of boys. I would like to know them—and will you kindly ask them to come up some time to the parsonage, when they can make it convenient? Perhaps they will sing for me, and I can promise them another kind of apples in return for those they gave me!

"Yours faithfully,

"G. L. MARCH."

For an instant the choir class stood, bereft of speech.

"Well, what do you say—can you make it convenient, some time?" asked Mr. Tilson, laughing.

A shriek of sudden joy arose from the throats of his charges.

“Go! You bet we’ll go! Ain’t he a dandy? We’ll make it convenient right now.”

And with shouts which pierced the skies, the choir class, once more restored to its former estate, tore like a whirlwind out of its churchyard, and along the leafy street, until it disappeared within the parsonage gate.

IX

THE GREAT GAME

“**S**AY, Mr. Tilson, tell us about some of those times when you were on the team!” pleaded the choir class, after an exciting practice game with the altar boys, preparatory to the great match of the season with the St. Gabriels, up the river.

“Let me see,” returned the popular curate, throwing himself down on the turf, while the rival nines perched themselves around him in their grass-stained uniforms, “did I ever tell you about that catch I made when I was playing centre?”

“No, sir, tell us now,” urged his flatteringly attentive audience.

“Well, it was at the Polo Grounds. Harvard won the toss, and had had the advantage right along so far. She made two runs in the second inning, and the best we could do was to get men on bases, without being able to

bring them in. Frank Wilmer—he's rector up at St. Gabriel's now, you know—was our pitcher, and he whispered to me to look out for the Harvard third baseman, who was a terrific hitter. I had my eyes open, you may be sure, but nothing came my way. It ran along to the last inning with no change—Harvard still two to our nothing. The grand stand was packed with old grads who had been up for their class reunions, and they were shouting away to beat the band.

“In the ninth, the first batter up for us was Billy Matthews, and the roar could have been heard down at the Battery, when he rapped out a three bagger. Then I followed with a sacrifice, which brought Billy home, and, as they fumbled it, got me to first. You should have seen the old grads falling on each other's necks and whooping it up for Yale.

“That was all very well so far as it went, but I was only on first, and the next man wasn't much of a hitter. The only thing for me to do, of course, was to steal second, but the Harvards were on to me, and their pitcher got that ball down to first every time I put

my foot off the base. Just then, some one set up a special screech from the Harvard end of the grand stand, and the catcher, who had the ball, took his eye off me for an instant to see what the matter was—and how I scooted! Charlie, you remind me of myself, that way.”

“Gee!” remarked the blushing and gratified champion base runner of the St. Michaels.

“Well, I slid ten feet on my stomach, but I managed to get there ahead of the ball, by about six inches. At all events, the umpire called it safe, and I didn’t kick, though the Harvards did. The next man got his base on balls, so I needn’t have risked it as it turned out, for I would have been pushed along anyway.

“Then came Larry Elkins, and he gave a beautiful whack into the bleachers, that sent us all around, and put us two runs to the good. The next two men fanned out, so the score then stood 4 to 2 in our favour, with Harvard’s half of the inning for them to tie us.

“Of course we thought we had them cold,

and you can guess how we felt when the first man made a home run. The Harvard crowd went crazy—they howled and yelped and screeched for five minutes, and the umpire called time.

“The second man struck out, and we breathed again. The third man got to first on his own hit; stole second, and reached third on a wild throw by our catcher. After five minutes of more roars from the Harvards, every one settled down till it was so still you could have heard a pin drop.

“The next batter up was the third baseman Frank had warned me against. He came up with a smirk on his face, and grasped his stick with ‘a-three-bagger-at-least’ written all over him. Crack—went his bat, and out flew the ball over our pitcher’s and short-stop’s heads. On it went sailing away, pointing up over mine, too. The sun got in my eyes, and I could hardly see, anyway, but I ran on blindly, till I figured it was somewhere near me. Then I turned and ran sideways a few feet, looking back over my shoulder. There it was—high above me still—and going like a cannon-

ball. Could I jump it? I took a fresh start—ran till I had almost reached the fence—then gave a tremendous leap—and the next thing I knew, I had that ball stuck to my hands as though it had grown there, and never meant to get away.

“Then you should have heard the Yale crowd! The Harvards’ performances had been like a deaf mute social. I stood still, trying to get my breath for a minute, till the boys came and carried me in on their shoulders. And right there right in the thick of the jam was my uncle, the tears running down his face, and he said:—‘Dick, I guess you get just about fifty dollars for making that catch’—and he handed it over then and there! Rah—rah—rah—rah—rah—rah—rah—YALE!” shouted the curate, laughing, as a wind-up.

“Gee! Wasn’t it great!” shrieked the choir class, while loud cries for more filled the air.

“No, time’s up,” declared the curate; “but baseball’s a great game, and you fellows want to work as hard as you know how all the time between now and next Saturday for if Frank

Wilmer's at all like himself, he'll have a team down here that can knock the stuffing out of you!"

Every afternoon for the coming week, the devoted St. Michaels might have been seen on the field, batting, running, pitching, throwing, doing every sort of practice that could help on the good work. For beat those St. Gabriels they must and they would. Their captain, Christie McCourt, found them only too eager to harken to his slightest command.

The equally devoted altar boys allowed themselves to be drawn into most hard fought contests for the sake of the cause. Strained fingers and lame arms were the order of the day, and the households of the coming heroes reeked with the fumes of arnica, witch-hazel, liniment, and decoctions of all kinds, while older brothers were pressed into the service as rubbers and bandagers. Allie, the pitcher, practiced so incessantly throwing at a mark, that his eyes began to feel bias, he said, and his precious arm was compelled to rest, done up in flannel, for fear of overstraining. The basemen timed themselves to see which

could make the best sprinting record. The battery became so perfect in their system of signals, that Allie could tell just what kind of ball Georgie was going to call for by the way he wriggled his nose.

The tension was painful, and it was with a general feeling of relief that the great day dawned. No practice was allowed on that eventful morning, only some light work in the gymnasium to keep the muscles limber.

An early afternoon train brought the buoyant and wiry St. Gabriels, with their athletic young rector, Mr. Wilmer, who was at once taken forcible possession of by Mr. Tilson, and carried off to the parish house.

The game had been looked forward to by all the boys in town, and the bleachers were filled long before the time appointed. The grand stand, also, was crowded. Not by boys alone, either—bright ribbons and fluttering curls were generously sprinkled about. And not by young people only. Plenty of the staid and grown up element found it quite in their way to saunter out to the pleasant, shady field, with the prospect of a good struggle in view, for the

prowess of the two nines had won them a far-reaching reputation.

At last the decisive hour approached. Deafening cheers greeted the arrival of the visiting nine, as it trotted out on the diamond for preliminary practice. It looked strong and muscular, and some faint hearts began to have misgivings. The home team appeared smaller and lighter when it, in turn, took its position and began to warm up. Mr. Waters, the genial and sportive young clergyman from across the way, was to act as umpire, and he, too, being extremely popular, was greeted with hearty applause, as he ordered:—"Play ball."

The two captains, meantime, had been conferring together, and the St. Gabriels had won the toss.

"Batter up," commanded Mr. Waters, and Billy Wells, heading the heavy batters of the St. Michaels, took his place.

Breathless silence ensued for a moment—then, *whizz* sped the white sphere from the pitcher's hands, landing with a neat plop in those of the catcher, while the devastating

words—"Strike one"—sent the loyal St. Michaels' hearts down to their boots, and correspondingly raised those of the St. Gabriels'.

Strike one was followed in rapid succession by strike two and strike three, and before the astonished St. Michaels could realize the overwhelming fact, their main dependence—the sturdy batsman, whose strong right arm had been counted on to send the ball across the river if need be, had struck out, and was shuffling back to the bench, his head down, and an air of utter dejection surrounding him.

The St. Gabriel pitcher's curves were baffling indeed to the St. Michaels, and two more mainstays fell before his deceitful delivery, after gently fanning the air in their surprise. Gloom already had descended on the bleachers, and, on the grand stand, the supporters of the visiting team were not sufficiently numerous to dispel entirely the prevailing atmosphere of surprised disappointment.

However, Allie proved as much of a puzzle to the visitors as their pitcher had been to the home team, and he repeated his rival's performance of striking out the other side. So

that, after the first inning, things settled down, and the two nines, having taken each other's measure, prepared to contend in earnest.

They were pretty evenly matched, and through four innings neither had the advantage. A home run by Christie put delirious joy into the hearts and tongues of his associates, but a St. Gabriel performed the same feat in the next inning. After the first few innings both pitchers were batted freely, the young arms not having the strength to keep up the swift, and consequently puzzling, delivery.

"Pretty good curves that fellow has, Dick," remarked Mr. Wilmer. "I wouldn't be at all surprised to hear of him later on."

"Yes, Allie *has* the makings of a fair pitcher, I think myself," returned Mr. Tilson, concealing his pride; "but your star can pitch some, too."

"I've been coaching him myself," replied Mr. Wilmer, modestly, "so he ought to."

Matters had progressed until the sixth inning, without much change, the score then standing 8 to 6 in favour of the St. Michaels, when, all at once, disaster, fleet and fatal,

loomed above its banners. Charlie, its swift-footed, lithe-limbed third baseman, after batting out a beautiful long liner, just where none of the fielders could reach it in time to field it back, started on his tour of the bases with a cheering certainty of reaching home safely, when his foot slipped, and down went the runner, lying still in his tracks.

Over rushed the umpire, and the other members of the nine, closely followed by the two young clergymen. Poor Charlie's face was very white, and his ankle was twisted under him.

"Bring him over to the side lines," directed Mr. Tilson, and willing hands carried the light figure to a bench where a hastily improvised couch was made of the bright red sweaters belonging to the visitors.

"Oh, Mr. Tilson, let me up—I must get that run!" murmured the white lips, not quite knowing what they said.

"Poor little chap! It's a shame!" cried the tender-hearted rector of the St. Gabriels.

"How about the game, Tilson?" asked the umpire; "is it off? I suppose so. Poor

Charlie, and poor every one! They'll be so disappointed."

"Say, Mr. Tilson, I can play some." The speaker was Jimmy Knight, well known to the umpire, of whose flock he had made one, up to within a very recent date.

"He can that, Tilson," corroborated Mr. Waters; "better try him."

"You'll have to speak to the captain," returned Mr. Tilson, who believed in respecting the proper authorities; "here, Christie, Jimmy says he can play, and Mr. Waters endorses him; shall we put him in, now that poor Charlie is out of it?"

The St. Michael's captain was a person of rapid decisions and convincing utterance.

"Git into that extra uniform, Jim, 'n git into the game, quick!" he observed, without further parley. And Jim got.

And, in a few minutes, the disappointed young sufferer, having been made comfortable, the injured ankle bandaged by Mr. Tilson's experienced hands, and its owner propped up with jackets that he might watch the game, play was resumed.

The new third baseman proved to be quite as skillful in the field as any of his fellows, and his batting arm was certainly no less effective than their own. Rap, went his bat, and off flew the ball as nimbly as any of the veterans could make it fly. Runs piled up on both sides, and, at the eighth inning, the score stood 13 to 11, but this time in favour of the St. Gabriels.

"Better get busy, Dick, if you're going to do any winning to-day," crowed their rector.

"It does look a little as though things were going your way," returned Mr. Tilson, "but don't do any shouting yet."

"All right, I won't, then, but tell me when to begin," retorted the exulting Mr. Wilmer.

The decisive ninth inning commenced amid great excitement. Two runs must be made up to tie the score. Remembering their curate's story of the stubborn Yale victory under similar circumstances, the St. Michaels set their teeth, and resolved to do or die. Georgie Childs was the first at the bat, and enthusias-

tic applause greeted his neat base hit, which, being followed by a high fly by Allie, which was muffed by the left fielder, the two runners reached home in safety, and the score was tied.

“No one out!” shouted the captain; “now, fellers, we’ve got ’m.”

But the next two men ignominiously struck out, in their agitation, and a deep groan arose from the watchers.

Then out stepped Jimmy, the substitute. There was a look in his eye that meant business. Not in the least flustered or hurried, he deliberately grasped his bat, waited till three balls had been called on him, and then, as he saw one to his liking come spinning along, he hit it with great precision directly between the short stop’s legs, and sped like a deer, amid the shrill howls of the assembled multitude. Slowing up a minute at first, but hearing agonized “go ons—go ons” from every side as the short stop, after frantically twisting and turning to pick up the ball, finally, in his excitement, threw it some ten feet over the first baseman’s head, he continued his flight around the bases, and fell, a breathless but happy heap across

the home plate, just ahead of the ball, which had eluded the fielders till too late to put out the runner.

The wildest confusion ensued. Cheer after cheer rent the air, as Jimmy, regaining his wind, walked proudly and redly back to the bench, tipping his cap to the grand stand, in response to its recognition of his efforts.

This staggering feat, coming, as it did, after a hard fought and wearing struggle, seemed to weaken the spirit of the visiting nine, for its batters struck out in one, two, three order, thereby bringing the game to a speedy conclusion, with a final score of 14 to 13 in favour of the St. Michaels.

Long and loud was the shouting, and the happy substitute to whom belonged the glory of making the winning run tasted the novel sensation of being a hero.

"Gee! But you made good, Jim!" exclaimed the incapacitated champion sprinter, generously.

"Jimmy, I'm proud of you!" cried Mr. Tilson, clapping him on the back.

"Yes, indeed, Jimmy, I'm proud, too; you

reflect great credit on my judgment," put in his former pastor, laughing delightedly.

"Come on, fellers, let's carry Jim back to the house!" and the rest of the team, laughing and shouting, picked up their hero, and bore him off in triumph.

"Stop in at my study, Frank, when you get through," called Mr. Tilson to his friend, who had been watching the last inning from the side lines, and who was now actively engaged in administering consolation to his defeated nine, some of whom were darkly inclined to tears.

"Never mind, boys," he was saying, "we'll have a series, and make this the first. Better luck next time. There'd be no fun in meeting a weak nine; you want a rattling good one like this to play against. Give them three cheers this time, and perhaps the next, the cheers will be on you."

And the St. Gabriels, thus stimulated, set up a rousing tribute to the skill of their enemies.

"Come in with me, Waters, I want you to know Wilmer better; he's a mighty good fel-

low, if he is my own sort," urged Mr. Tilson, as the two clergymen strolled back to the parish house.

"All right," returned Mr. Waters; "I'd be glad to," and the two young men were soon deep in recollections of their own college games.

"Here he is at last," cried the curate, as steps were heard outside; "come in, Frank; what are you stopping to knock for?"

The door swung slowly open, disclosing, not the stalwart form and broad shoulders of the athletic rector of St. Gabriel's, but two small and shrinking figures, which resolved themselves into the captain of the victorious team, and his triumphant substitute.

"Why, boys, what's the matter? You look as though you were going to be hung. What's happened?"

"Jim's got something to tell you, Mr. Waters," began the captain, turning to the late umpire, his cheeks flushing and his dark blue eyes filling with tears of mortification; "we ain't won that game, after all."

"What in the world!" exclaimed Mr. Tilson, while Jimmy's ex-pastor added:—



“Jim’s got something to tell you, Mr. Waters, we ain’t won that game after all.”

"Not won it! Of course you have—speak up, Jimmy, what do you mean?"

"Why, Mr. Waters, I never touched that third base," faltered the poor substitute. "I was running so fast, I just slid by, 'n I never stopped to think till afterwards."

"'N of course if we didn't win fair, we don't want to win at all," supplemented his leader, simply.

"Besides," added the recent comer, "Mr. Tilson he'd make us tell, anyhow." Jimmy had had some experience of his new clergyman's methods.

"Well, my boy," replied Mr. Tilson, slowly, "I *hope* I should, but it would have been pretty hard to own up when I was your age, especially if the umpire hadn't noticed it. However, as Christie says, we can't take victories that don't belong to us, so we'll just call this game a tie, and perhaps next time we'll do better."

"Call this game a tie—what are you talking about?" put in Mr. Wilmer, just then returned from sustaining his broken-spirited team.

"Why, it seems we didn't win, after all.

Jimmy, here, passed third base without touching it."

"He says so, does he?" returned Mr. Wilmer, looking hard at poor Jimmy, who flushed scarlet under his gaze.

"Yes, sir," faltered that culprit, "I ran right by 'n never ——"

"Well, Jimmy, I'm sorry to be obliged to accuse you of not telling the truth, but I happened to be standing close by the base, because when I saw you making the circuit, I thought how easy it would be for you to slide by without touching it, and the rest would be so excited they wouldn't notice it. So, there I was, ready to spot you, and, whatever you may *think*, your foot stepped squarely on one corner as you flew past, and here I am to prove it."

"Oh, Chris!" exclaimed the now completely unstrung substitute, throwing his arms around his captain's neck.

"Bully!" replied that leader briefly, but to the point, so far forgetting himself as to return the hug. "I told you some one would a seen it if you'd skipped it," and the two boys rushed joyfully off to restore their fellows once more

to the heights of that rejoicing from which they had been so cruelly plunged.

“So, ‘Mr. Tilson would make us tell, anyhow,’ would he?” observed Mr. Waters, reflectively. “Pretty good hold you’ve got over them, Tilson—how do you do it? I wish you’d give me a few lessons.”

“Well,” returned the boys’ own curate, “*I* should say Jimmy had had a pretty good training before he ever came to us. Send us over any more black sheep you may happen to have on hand, Waters; this kind is good enough for me.”

X

A CHOIR ROOM ZOO

“**W**HERE is Allie this morning—I missed him in church?” asked Miss Chalmers, coming into the choir room for the lesson.

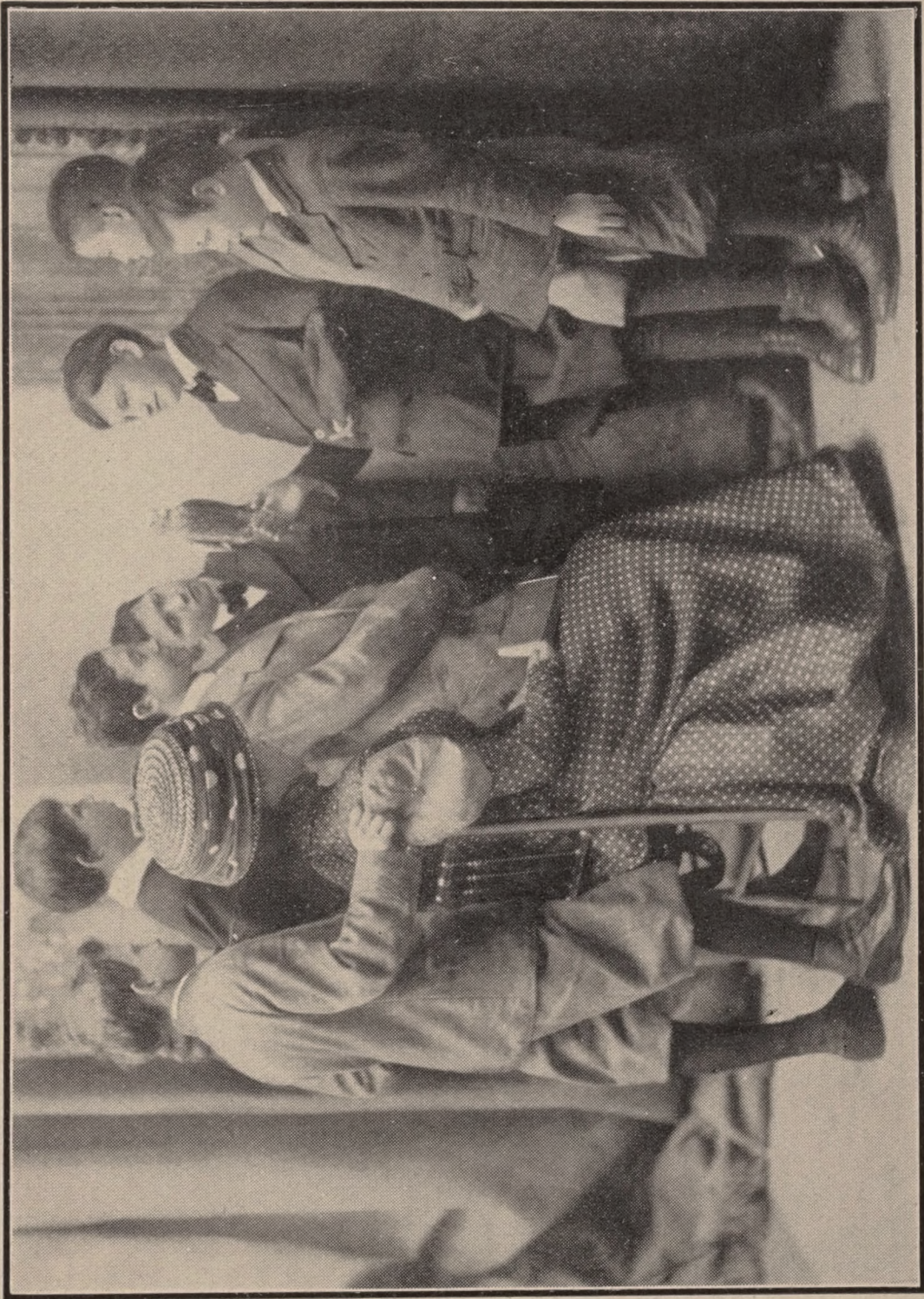
“Oh, he feels so badly about Polly, he couldn’t sing,” spoke up Charlie; “she’s been lost three days.”

“Hasn’t he found her yet? Oh, poor Allie! No wonder he couldn’t sing. Well, we must begin without him, I suppose.”

“Here he is now,” broke in an eager voice near the door.

And in came a small, red-eyed, swollen-nosed, husky-voiced Allie, closely hugging to his breast a fluffy ball of soft gray feathers with red tipped wings and crest.

“Oh, Allie! You’ve found her! The dear little thing! Tell us all about it!” exclaimed Miss Chalmers; “the lesson must wait.”



“Oh, Allie, you’ve found her—the dear little thing—tell us all about it.”

“ Well, I got up early this morning, ’n went up on the hill back of the house, ’n I called ’n called, but nothin’ answered, ’n I ’bout made up my mind she was gone for good. Then I happened to think of some blackberry vines over by the brook, ’n when every one had gone to church, ’n it was all quiet, I tried callin’ her again, ’n at last I thought I heard a little scratchin’ noise, ’n I went over ’n there she was, w-with her little f-feet all c-caught fast, ’n so weak ’n hungry she could hardly speak,” faltered poor Allie, his tears flowing afresh at the remembrance.

A brisk interchange of handkerchiefs was progressing among the rest of the class, while Miss Chalmers choked palpably.

“ Oh, Allie ! And what did you do, dear ? ”

“ I took her up, ’n she cuddled her little head in my neck, ’n she said :—‘ K-kiss me, Allie, P-Polly’s s-si-ick,’ ” sobbed Allie, in a general mingling of tears, while little Polly, her eyes closed, crooned in exhausted but happy contentment.

“ What in the world is the matter with everybody ? ” cried a cheerful voice from the

door. "Miss Chalmers, are you all in disgrace together—and have I got to pull you out of the scrape?"

It did not take long to put Mr. Tilson in possession of the facts, and he fully appreciated the magnitude of the event which had caused such deep seated emotion in the choir room.

"Perhaps I'd better stay and help you out with the lesson, instead of going to walk," he suggested, and his disinterested offer was joyfully accepted, a visit from the popular curate being always hailed with rejoicing.

"Lot's Wife is our topic to-day," began Miss Chalmers, recovering her composure. "Jimmy, you may draw the picture."

A broad smile diffused itself over the faces turned in pleased welcome towards the door behind her, through which stalked a great tawny, black-striped tiger, his tail waving proudly aloft, a benevolent smile on his face, and a large pink bow under his chin.

Pausing only to rub up against his old friend, Mr. Tilson, in kindly greeting, and casting an approving glance of good fellowship impartially

over the choir class, the tiger made a dive for Miss Chalmers' lap, and purred loudly.

"Why, Brownie!" exclaimed his mistress, "how did you get out? It is all I can do to keep him from following me to Sunday-school, but this time I thought I had him safely locked up. Christie, you run home with him—go with Christie, pussy pet."

"Oh, Miss Chalmers, let him stay, he's so good," pleaded his young friends, and Brownie, planting his claws firmly in Miss Chalmers' gown, and emphatically expressing his determination not to move, was finally allowed to make one of the class.

"But we must begin now," decreed the young teacher, mindful, out of the corner of her own eye, of a twinkle in Mr. Tilson's. "Jerome, you tell the story."

"Lot, he ——" began Jerome, then broke off short, and giggled.

"What is it now?" asked Miss Chalmers, following his eyes.

Two fuzzy tips were sticking in the doorway. They pushed farther and farther in, till they resolved themselves into two long brown

ears. Besides the ears, there was a rough nose, two bright little eyes, a very small shaggy body, and four little feet, which walked in boldly, evidently expecting a warm welcome.

"Why, it's Wee Willie Winkie," exclaimed Miss Chalmers; "how did you come here, sir?"

"I tied him up to the gate so tight I didn't think he could get loose," returned Charlie; "but he can untie 'most any knot with his teeth, if he can reach it."

"Here, Winkie," said Mr. Tilson, "come over here by the door. You don't seem to know this is a Sunday-school class which is trying to say its lesson!" And Winkie, his nose buried in Mr. Tilson's pocket, settled down to contentment and sugar, being perfectly at home in places where small donkeys are not usually encouraged.

"There *are* advantages in having a choir room entirely detached from the church, and with an entrance of its own," went on Mr. Tilson, laughing, "but, unless you really need more scholars, it might be well to close the door."

"There can't be any more to-day, I'm sure," returned Miss Chalmers; "go on, Jerome."

"And the angels said: 'Don't you dare look back, or you'll be sorry ——'" continued Jerome, conscientiously.

"Oh, look who's here," interrupted Christie, chuckling, and Miss Chalmers, beginning to redden a little, turned to view one black eye and one white one, shining above a wrinkled nose at the beginning of a plump, white body, ending in a stubby, wriggling tail.

"Mike! This is getting too much!" she cried, as a young and lively bulldog, of the most approved points, and wearing an amiably ferocious smile, pranced in and threw himself all over Georgie, with joyful barks.

"I left him shut up at home, honest I did, Miss Chalmers," deprecated Georgie, holding back the exuberant Mike by his collar.

"Oh, please let him stay now; he'll be quiet, 'n Brownie doesn't mind him," pleaded the choir class.

And, as a matter of fact, Brownie, having had many a friendly tussle with Mike, out of which he invariably emerged the victor, smiled

approvingly upon the snub-nosed friend of his youth, and purred his loudest.

"Well, I suppose they can all stay, now they're here, and I'm not at all sure they aren't the best behaved scholars in the room," consented Miss Chalmers; "but we don't want Mr. Tilson to think this is the way we have our lesson generally."

"Oh, no indeed; I'm sure the boys are usually worn to the bone by their strenuous efforts," returned Mr. Tilson.

"Jimmy, you'd better begin your picture," said Miss Chalmers, ignoring the flippancy; "no, the twenty minutes are up, and we can't have it after all. But I give notice now, that this class will meet for the lesson we didn't have at my house on Wednesday afternoon, and only regular members will be expected on that occasion."

"Well, if we can't come then," put in Mr. Tilson, "we think we had better make as much of an appearance as we can, *while* we can." And with this, he drew from an inside pocket a little ball of black silk.

"Oh, it's Little Black Lilly!" screamed the

delighted choir class ; " why didn't you let her out before, Mr. Wilson ? "

" Well, I didn't seem to think Miss Chalmers really wanted any more scholars to-day," replied the curate, laughing. " Isn't she a little daisy ? " he went on, proudly ; " don't let Mike eat her up, Georgie."

" Oh, Mike wouldn't hurt a fly," declared Mike's doting owner.

" Make her do some tricks, Mr. Tilson, *please !* " pleaded the others.

" Be dead, Lilly," commanded her master. Over went the little black ball, stiff and stark, one eye only winking up to see what was going on.

" Now, jump up on the table and bring my hat," was the next order, when the stiffened corpse had been restored to life once more.

Away sped the little creature, springing from a chair on to the table, from which she pushed the hat to the floor. Then, jumping down herself, she tugged and shoved and dragged it along, being too small to do more than set her little teeth in the rim, until she reached her master, when she hopped in,

curled herself into a ball, and waited expectantly to be taken up and petted.

"More—more," cried the boys, eagerly.

"Here, Lilly," responded Mr. Tilson, tossing down a bit of candy, "put your paw on that." Out went the little black paw. "On trust!" continued the curate. Lilly stood motionless. "Paid for." And, with one snap of the little red mouth, down went the coveted morsel.

"Lilly isn't the only four-footed scholar who can do tricks," interposed Miss Chalmers, jealously. "Brownie, darling, sit up and shake hands." Up went the tawny tiger with the pink bow, like a ramrod, and offered his hand right and left, to his admiring friends. This feat he followed by rolling over, jumping through a hoop at three times his height, and kissing, by request, the tip of any nose that presented itself for that mark of affection.

"Hi! Hi! Bow-wow-wow—siss! Sic 'em! Sic 'em! Cats!" shrieked Polly, aroused for the first time from her safe but sleepy refuge under Allie's chin.

"The dear little thing!" exclaimed Miss

Chalmers; "she is beginning to feel like herself, isn't she?"

"Get out! Get out! Twenty-three! Skid-doo!" returned Polly, snapping at the pretty fingers petting her red crested head.

"Not quite dead, is she, Allie?" laughed Mr. Tilson. "Here, Charlie, what's the matter with Winkie? Why isn't he doing his stunts, too, with the rest of the scholars?"

"I haven't got anything to give him," replied Charlie, somewhat mortified at having to confess the mercenary spirit of his pet.

"Let him have this maple sugar," suggested Miss Chalmers; "now, Winkie, show what you can do, sir."

And Wee Willie Winkie, under pressure, shook hands as ardently as Brownie, laughed, sneezed, stood on his hind legs, and bowed to the applauding audience.

"Now, it's Mike's turn," declared Georgie, by no means proposing to have his pupil's brilliancy detracted from by these lesser lights; "he can't do but one thing, 'n it's taken him about three months to learn that—but it's awful hard."

At his command, Mike advanced into the centre of the room, bowed politely, "spoke," then slowly and carefully lowered his head, balanced himself on it for a moment, and gradually turned a complete somersault.

"Well, that *is* a trick! Come here, old fellow," cried Mr. Tilson, as the pleased and smiling Mike made the rounds of his friends, fully appreciating his own achievements, and graciously accepting his well-earned praises.

"Now we must go along—say good-bye, Lilly. We've had a most instructive morning, Miss Chalmers, let us know when you're going to have any more lessons like this, please. We'll give up our walk any time."

"Oh, Mr. Tilson, make Lilly sing!" begged Christie. "I know she hates it, but she's so cunning!"

"She'll have to be bribed like Winkie, then," returned Lilly's proud master, not at all averse; "now then, Miss, will you sing pretty for this?" holding up an enticing bit of Winkie's sugar.

The little black and tan sprang up in his lap, planted her tiny feet firmly against his

shoulder, threw back her head, and lifted up her voice in a heart-rending wail.

Louder and louder and shriller and more agonized it grew. "Higher—higher," commanded Mr. Tilson, and up soared the piercing tones, till they rent the roof.

Brownie began to wriggle uneasily. Back went his ears. His tail thumped ominously. "Me-eo-meou-meow!" he finally observed, disapprovingly, at the top of his lungs, in ear-splitting rivalry.

This was more than sufficient intimation to Mike that his services were required, and, taking his cue from his furry friend, he plunged into the "singing" contest, with a series of deafening barks on high C.

Next, Polly, hearing in this an invasion of her own special province, promptly started a realistic imitation of an angry parrot, screaming at the height of its voice.

While little Wee Willie Winkie, standing perfectly quiet and good as gold at the door, patiently waiting for Sunday-school to be over, felt that he owed it to himself to show these alleged singers what singing really was,

and, entirely against his own wishes, and purely from philanthropic motives, he lifted up his own voice in a succession of the most penetrating brays.

“Ah, my dear, aren’t the boys making a *little* more noise than usual?” asked the kind old rector, putting his head in at the vestry door, and once again congratulating himself on the wisdom of holding the choir class at a different hour from the rest of the school.

“Just a little, rector,” returned Mr. Tilson. “Come in, sir, and see what you think of Miss Chalmers’ new scholars.”

“Well—well!” exclaimed the rector. “I think if I had been sent to a class like this, I should not have dreaded Sunday-school as I am sorry to say I did. My teacher didn’t approve of much of anything that boys liked,” he went on, picking up Lilly, and gently scratching Winkie’s long ears, without commenting on their presence—no one ever being surprised at anything that might take place in the choir class, which, owing to the Bishop’s tender-hearted concern at the restraint imposed by the long services on the young choristers, was

exempt from all ordinary rules, and was only held together by the constant ingenuity of its resourceful and comprehendingly sympathetic guardians.

"We've got the nicest teacher ever, 'n Mr. Tilson, he's a dandy, too!" responded their appreciative charges, greatly to the embarrassment of Miss Chalmers and the curate, unaccustomed to such public and unqualified approval.

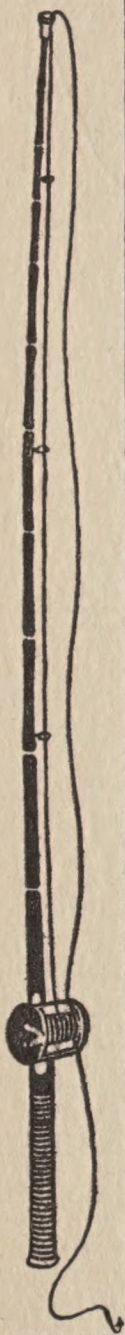
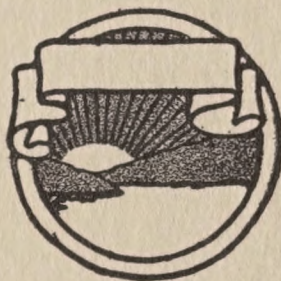
"'N that ain't all," shouted Christie; "we got the best rector in the whole world, ain't we, fellers?"

"You bet we have!" chorused his loyal colleagues, affectionately precipitating themselves upon the kind old man with vigorous bear hugs, and vanishing in the series of wild war-whoops which, on the Day of Rest, proclaimed to all within hearing that Saint Michael's choir class was dismissed.



The Boy's Own Bookshelf

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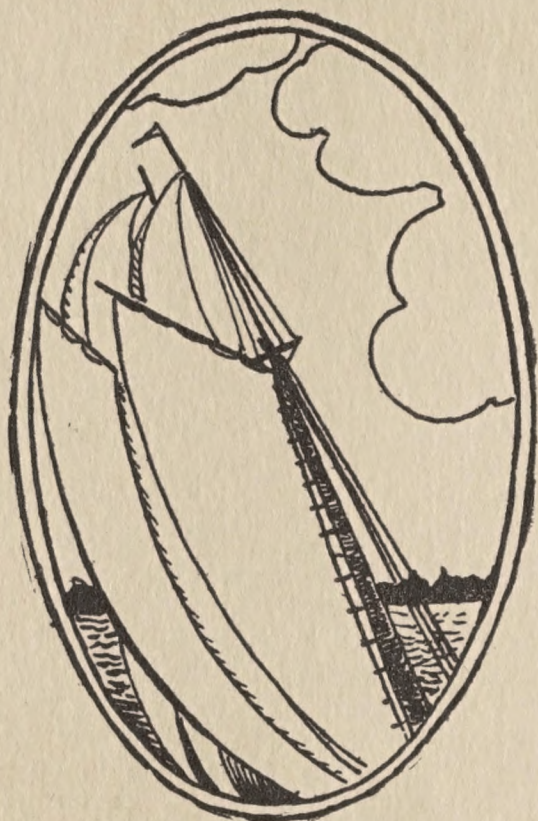
"Boys, animal-lovers, and those who like to read of adventure will find this book one to rejoice in greatly. Mr. Young gives us true sketches of his dogs who have shared his sledge journeys, his dangers, privations and odd experiences. Since 'Bob, Son of Battle' (which this book does not in the least resemble), there has been no better study of dog nature."—*Outlook*.

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—*Pittsburg Post*.

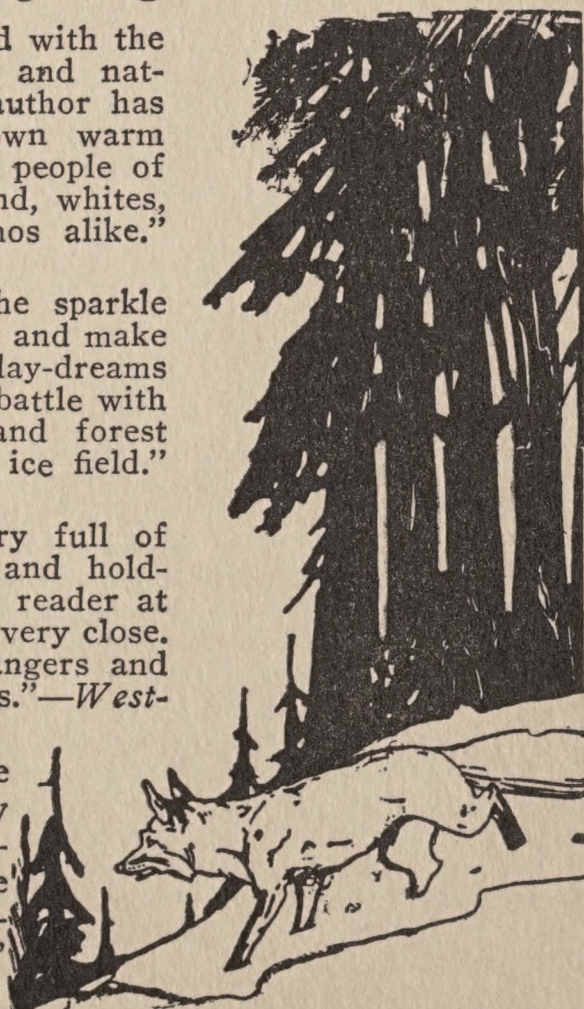
"Should bring the sparkle to many a lad's eye and make him wish in his day-dreams that he, too, might battle with dangers of cold and forest depth and heaving ice field."

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"Ralph Connor plays his game with a sincerity so absolutely convincing that one is swept along by his masterly impulse through page after page, feeling part and parcel of the life he depicts."—*Independent*.

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